

Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand seven hundred and third plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 26 February 2024, at 10.05 a.m.

President: Mr. Febrian A. Ruddyard(Indonesia)



The President: I call to order the 1703rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Excellencies, distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all dignitaries and distinguished colleagues participating in today's meeting.

We shall begin this morning with the 2024 high-level segment of the Conference on Disarmament. Before we start with the list of speakers, allow me to say a few words on the arrangement for the high-level segment. All speakers during the high-level segment will be invited to speak from the rostrum. After completing their remarks, all speakers are invited either to return to their seat behind their national nameplate or to exit the conference room through the door located behind the rostrum. Pre-recorded video statements will be played as time allows during the course of the high-level segment, taking into account the scheduled times allocated for in-person speakers and the length of the in-person statement. I will give the floor to any delegation that has indicated that it would like to react to statements during the course of the high-level segment only after we have concluded the final list of speakers for the segment. Any delegation wishing to make a statement after we have concluded the final list of speakers is requested to contact the secretariat.

Excellencies, distinguished colleagues, I invite to the rostrum Her Excellency Retno Lestari Priansari Marsudi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. I extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guest. You have the floor, Madam.

Ms. Marsudi (Indonesia): Mr. President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, Indonesia is honoured to assume the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament while remaining cognizant of the enormous challenges that it is facing. The stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament persists against the backdrop of hate and tension in the global security landscape. But an atmosphere of distrust is not something given, nor is it universal. It is up to us to break the impasse and ensure that the Conference on Disarmament does not become an end in itself. Therefore, as the State holding the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, Indonesia is committed to promoting transparency, balance and a relentless pursuit of constructive dialogue.

I wish to underline three key messages. First, we need to recommit ourselves to the pursuit of global disarmament. Indonesia is proud to have ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and is ready to work together to pursue its universalization. Indonesia is also a long-standing supporter of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and we appreciate the Treaty for its invaluable contribution through its monitoring system and disaster risk reduction. We call on nuclear-weapon States to fully implement and achieve their obligation and commitment, including in the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Together with fellow members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Indonesia continuously advocates for early signing of the Protocol to the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone by the five permanent members of the Security Council.

Second, we should focus on what unites us rather than what divides us. There is no alternative to peace and disarmament, and there is no alternative to a collective will to make the Conference on Disarmament work. We need to aim for progress in both procedural and substantive aspects, and we need to steer our focus on converging issues, including legally binding negative security assurances and a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Third, we need to address emerging security challenges. The Conference on Disarmament must be adaptive and responsive to the evolving security landscape and the rise of new technology and weapons systems and modern warfare, including to consider the impact of autonomous weapons systems and their potential regulation, as well as realizing a treaty aimed at preventing an arms race in outer space.

The atrocities in Gaza show that nuclear weapons do not contribute to security. As a matter of fact, they were being used in language to threaten civilians, and it is deplorable and should not be normalized. We need to prevent further deaths in Gaza, including by stopping the flow of arms and weapons to Israel. We also regret the lack of consensus on the application by the State of Palestine to obtain observer status in the Conference on Disarmament, despite its active engagement in global disarmament efforts. It is time to set aside political disputes and bring humanity back to the Conference.

Moving forward, Indonesia remains committed to work together to furthering the peace and disarmament agenda through the Conference on Disarmament, and I invite all members to join us in this pursuit. I thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President: I thank Her Excellency Marsudi for her statement. Excellencies, distinguished delegates, the Conference on Disarmament will now hear the address by Her Excellency Gabriela Sommerfeld, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility of Ecuador, through a pre-recorded video.

Ms. Sommerfeld (Ecuador) (*in a pre-recorded video statement, spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, permanent representatives and delegates, it is an honour to address the Conference, which is a body of crucial importance for international peace and security and the sole United Nations forum mandated to negotiate legally binding international instruments in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

We believe that the efforts made by the Conference to fulfil its important mandate must be more effective, in accordance with the objectives of the Charter of the United Nations and the expectations of victims of armed conflicts in different parts of the world. The current scenario of warlike confrontations characterized by clear polarization entails additional challenges and new difficulties relating to artificial intelligence, lethal autonomous weapons systems, biological and toxin weapons, and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. All this obliges us to step up our efforts to strengthen the Conference's essential objectives, as well as its organs and instruments, through dialogue mechanisms that enable us to improve its functioning and working methods.

A number of multilateral disarmament forums are in a state of paralysis at one of the most challenging times for international peace and security in recent history, a time when it is necessary to promote dialogue and multilateralism. Today more than ever, when there is growing concern about the grave effects of war and the latent threat of use of nuclear weapons, it is vital for the Conference to return to the essence of its mandate and make a substantive contribution to international peace and security.

Ecuador became a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 2023 and has used its seat to reiterate its unreserved commitment to global security, disarmament and non-proliferation. As an active member of the Conference, Ecuador invites you to assume the challenges and the commitments warranted by the current circumstances and establish a renewed and effective dialogue with a view to reaching new concrete and measurable commitments for the benefit of present and future generations. The results achieved decades ago in this forum demonstrated the great value of multilateralism, but, without this political will, all the efforts made by our States may become ineffective if they do not provide sufficient protection against the resurgence of armed conflict and the rise in the number of victims, not to mention the impact of armed conflict on the economy and on efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development. As Secretary-General António Guterres pointed out in A New Agenda for Peace, the new multilateralism demands that we look beyond our narrow security interests to a future where peace is envisaged from the perspective of sustainable development and human rights. International peace and security are at the heart of the foreign policy of Ecuador and a priority for the current Government, led by President Daniel Noboa Azin. We reiterate our unreserved support for multilateral efforts in the field of security and disarmament and we defend our right to demand security.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the third anniversary of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the fifty-seventh anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which made Latin America and the Caribbean the first nuclear-weapon-free zone. These two instruments, to which Ecuador is a party, are a clear example of what can be achieved with genuine political will.

Thank you.

The President: I thank Her Excellency Gabriela Sommerfeld for her statement. Excellencies, distinguished delegates, the Conference on Disarmament will now hear the address by His Excellency Ali Sabry, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka, through a pre-recorded video.

Mr. Sabry (Sri Lanka) (*in a pre-recorded video statement*): Mr. President, Madam Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I extend my felicitations to you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of this Conference and assure you of my country's fullest support in carrying out the important works of this Conference. I also appreciate the commitment and untiring efforts of the Indian presidency that preceded towards building consensus through open and broad consultations.

I am addressing this important body at a decisive time in human history. The need is more vital than ever for effective disarmament diplomacy. Against the backdrop of prevailing complex geopolitical tensions and threats to global peace, security and stabilization, as well as fast-emerging digital technologies, the need for the Conference on Disarmament to resume its substantive work is apparent. It is a matter of deep regret that for more than two decades the Conference has been deadlocked, preventing it from negotiating urgent matters of vital importance on its agenda.

It is also significant that the Conference addresses evolving issues related to disarmament. Advanced technologies provide new opportunities for the betterment of humankind, but if unregulated they also pose grave challenges. The use of artificial intelligence in weapons systems without human intervention is a matter of grave concern to my delegation. Sri Lanka consistently advocates the centrality of human control in weapons systems. In this context, I am pleased to recall that Sri Lanka co-sponsored the first ever General Assembly resolution on lethal autonomous weapons systems in September last year.

Outer space is a common heritage of mankind and should be kept free of weapons. However, the demarcations between civilian, commercial and military use of space technology are becoming increasingly opaque, while emerging space technologies pose a growing threat to humankind. Sri Lanka has persistently supported calls for a legally binding instrument to prevent an arms race in outer space which will address the gaps as they relate to new tracking technologies, the increasing number of actors in space and the proliferation of space debris. While discussions aimed at better understanding the potential threat to outer space by increased activity are welcome, that or voluntary transparency measures cannot be substituted for a verifiable legal instrument.

Nuclear disarmament is of the highest priority, particularly in the present geopolitical context. In keeping with the unwavering commitment of Sri Lanka to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, we ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and also acceded to the Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in 2023. Sri Lanka has also been selected to host the integrated field exercise in 2025, and we are also currently working with the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization related to its preparatory work. The possible use or threat of use of nuclear weapons poses an existential threat to humankind. It is therefore regrettable that this Conference has not been able to advance on negotiations for the early conclusion of a comprehensive convention on nuclear disarmament, as mandated by the General Assembly. While we remain committed to complete nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation as the only guarantee against their use, it is the legitimate expectation of non-nuclear-weapon States to have unconditional, non-discriminatory and irrevocably legally binding negative security assurances, particularly in the context of the increasing threat of these weapons.

The preservation of regional peace and security is the first step towards international peace and security. The Middle East is once again on the agenda of all multilateral forums, and the crisis in Gaza is in imminent danger of spilling over to the rest of the world. History has shown that peace and stability in the Middle East are crucial to global peace and stability. The threat of nuclear weapons is also very much alive in the region. While the immediate need is a humanitarian one, we strongly urge a resumption of active deliberation on establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region.

In conclusion, Mr. President, let me reiterate Sri Lanka's commitment to disarmament, and we look forward to fruitful deliberations. Thank you.

The President: I thank His Excellency Ali Sabry for his statement. Excellencies, distinguished delegates, I invite to the rostrum His Excellency Sameh Shoukry, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt and I extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guest. You have the floor, Minister.

Mr. Shoukry (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you and your friendly country, Indonesia, on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to assure you of the full support of Egypt for your active efforts to revitalize the Conference and restore its vital role in accordance with its negotiating mandate within the international system of disarmament mechanisms.

Our world today is experiencing growing security challenges that pose a serious challenge to the multilateral international system, especially its disarmament mechanisms. It is no longer possible to continue with the stalemate that has afflicted many of these mechanisms. This requires everyone to act responsibly by showing the necessary political will that reflects the international community's cognisance of the seriousness of the challenges of the current moment and helps these mechanisms to fulfil their responsibilities.

Since the end of the Second World War, the world has witnessed bloody conflicts that have resulted in grave human tragedies. It is stated in the preamble to the Charter of the United Nations that these tragedies should not be repeated, but unfortunately they have returned following the outbreak of the war in Gaza.

Egypt condemns all attacks on all civilians, regardless of religion, ethnicity or nationality, and emphasizes the need for an immediate cessation of the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, which has resulted in the killing of more than 29,000 civilians, most of them women and children. Egypt stresses the necessity of reaching a sustainable ceasefire and ensuring sustained humanitarian assistance to civilian victims in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, most recently resolution 2720 (2023).

Has the global conscience lost its compass and become indifferent to this human suffering, failing to confront it or call for an end to the military actions that are claiming the lives of increasing numbers of innocent civilians, including women and children, month after month? The international community is not taking any action. On the contrary, efforts to stop the destruction and killing are being obstructed. This is an unprecedented situation that violates the peremptory norms of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Applying double standards, some take a selective view of the value of human life and become annoyed, dismissive and condemnatory if it comes down to the lives of one group and not another, even if they are subjected to the cruellest and most gruesome deaths and injuries. Egypt emphasizes that Israel must assume its responsibility in this regard as the occupying Power under international law. It firmly rejects any attempts to forcibly displace the Palestinian people from their land. The international community must assume its responsibility to protect the Palestinian people from the horrors to which they are being subjected and to support their inalienable right to establish a Palestinian State on their land, occupied since 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, within the framework of the two-State solution.

The Conference on Disarmament plays a pivotal role on the international security front in the light of the security challenges the world is facing, which requires us all to make every effort to prevent further deterioration and to establish and sustain peace.

Although the Conference succeeded many times in overcoming the polarization at the height of the cold war and produced many instruments that shaped the international disarmament system, over the past 28 years, it has suffered from a stalemate that has prevented it from adopting an agenda that would allow it to fulfil its role in accordance with its negotiating mandate. Despite sincere attempts to break the deadlock, some of which came close to achieving that goal, these efforts soon collided with either the state of international polarization or the desire of some to work to achieve their own interests and maintain a relative advantage at the expense of others, which is no longer a secret to anyone.

The failure of many international disarmament mechanisms to fulfil their role is clearly due mainly to the persistent refusal of the nuclear-weapon States to make any serious progress on verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament. The fact that the nuclear-weapon States continue to evade their nuclear disarmament obligations under article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and continue to perpetuate the discriminatory nature of Treaty obligations, to expand their nuclear arsenals horizontally and vertically and to adopt extended nuclear deterrence doctrines that allow the use of these weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States poses a threat to the credibility of the international nuclear disarmament and

non-proliferation system and is undoubtedly not in compliance with the Treaty, thus jeopardizing its viability.

In the light of its historical contribution to the formation of the international disarmament system, Egypt emphasizes the importance of restoring the centrality of disarmament and arms control issues on the international agenda. There can be no development without stability, no stability without security and no security in the face of an arms race and the excessive waste of resources, as global military spending has soared to unprecedented levels. Therefore, reaching a balanced and comprehensive agenda for the Conference on Disarmament is an essential step towards restoring the effectiveness of the disarmament system, especially after the successive failures of the 2015 Review Conference and the Review Conference held in 2022.

In this context, Egypt stresses the importance of nuclear-weapon States' compliance with their legal obligations to achieve verifiable nuclear disarmament in accordance with the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the outcomes of the 1995, 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences, and to work towards the rapid realization of the universality of the Treaty. It is important to recall that the Non-Proliferation Treaty could not have been extended indefinitely without the adoption of a single package of decisions by the 1995 Review Conference that provided for the achievement of nuclear disarmament and the universalization of the Treaty and the 1995 decision to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

The ongoing war in Gaza, during which official threats have been made to use nuclear weapons against the Palestinian people in Gaza, obliges all peace-loving forces to work to restore and strengthen the pillars of regional stability in the Middle East. Egypt therefore emphasizes the importance of ensuring that the nuclear-weapon States, especially the three depositories of the Treaty, assume their responsibilities to take all measures to support the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, which remains valid until it is implemented, including support for the United Nations conference on the implementation of the resolution. The objective is to develop an international treaty agreed upon by the States of the region of their own free will and by consensus, especially since this process has succeeded over four sessions of the conference in achieving balanced outcomes that clearly reflect the absence of any prior monitoring or desire to exclude or isolate a particular State. The reluctance of States to participate reflects their lack of credibility in supporting the non-proliferation system and their selective treatment of it according to their political visions and self-interest.

Given the strategic tension in the world between nuclear-weapon States and the erosion of arms control mechanisms that worked for decades to contain this tension, in addition to the repeated incidents involving the threat of use of nuclear weapons, including in conflicts with conventional weapons and against non-nuclear parties, it is necessary to work towards legally binding security guarantees against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear States.

The international community realized early on the need to take this step and emphasized it in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in 1978 and reflected it in the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament, objectively the most appropriate forum in which to achieve the desired progress in this regard. In the same context, Egypt reiterates its position with regard to any draft treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes. The scope of such a treaty should include existing stocks of such material. Such a legal instrument, if achieved, would be a balanced, effective and non-discriminatory instrument to promote both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and to prevent nuclear-weapon States from continuing to possess nuclear weapons in perpetuity. What is required is fairness in responding to the security concerns of all without perpetuating discriminatory situations that would undermine the seriousness and balance of the hoped-for treaty. In this regard, Egypt emphasizes that the Conference on Disarmament is the most appropriate forum in which to address this issue. This is not impossible in view of the fact that the Conference agreed in 2009, on the basis of document CD/1299, on a consensus mandate that takes into account the concerns of all.

The international community realized early on the strategic dimensions of the security environment in outer space and its close connection to the strategic balance between nuclear Powers, which made the prevention of an arms race in outer space one of its main objectives in order to achieve international security and stability. This has been reflected in international multilateral mechanisms that have adopted multiple resolutions, including a resolution that Egypt and Sri Lanka alternately submit annually to the First Committee of the General Assembly and that is adopted by consensus. Egypt therefore stresses the importance of coordinating international action leading to the commencement of negotiations within the Conference on Disarmament on a draft binding legal agreement to prevent an arms race in outer space, especially since outer space technologies have become a fundamental pillar of development, security and stability in our contemporary world. The threat of armed conflict in space or the extension of existing armed conflicts to outer space has increased against the backdrop of the tendency of many international Powers to weaponize outer space. Working to integrate the existing initiatives on the prohibition of the placement of weapons in space and the prohibition of the use of force to deliberately target satellites, which have the support of the vast majority of States, are positive steps that are easy to take in the short term.

Mr. President, the success of the Conference on Disarmament in adopting a programme of work for the current year will mark a necessary step on the path towards restoring the credibility of the international multilateral system, which is in the direct interest of strengthening international peace and security, the primary purpose of the United Nations. In this regard, Egypt calls on all States members of the Conference to show positivity and the necessary flexibility in dealing with the draft programme of work that the Indian presidency of the Conference has worked so hard on. The experiences of previous years have shown the importance of considering the development of the Conference's working methods, ensuring a minimum level of continuity in its work and building on any progress made, regardless of its size, to avoid wasting efforts and starting from scratch at the beginning of each year.

The current delicate international climate requires us to exert all necessary efforts not to give up in the face of the multiple challenges facing multilateral international action. Egypt therefore looks forward with interest to the convening of the fourth special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament in order to address the emerging strategic challenges on the international security front. In conclusion, I affirm the commitment of Egypt to support all the efforts of the presidencies of the Conference on Disarmament to revive its historic role and contribute to the adoption of a comprehensive and balanced programme of work that responds to our common goals in a more secure and stable world. Thank you.

The President: I thank His Excellency Sameh Shoukry for his statement. Excellencies, distinguished delegates, I invite to the rostrum His Excellency Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia, and I extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guest. You have the floor, Sir.

Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): In the name of God the merciful, the compassionate – Ambassador Febrian Ruddyard, President of the Conference on Disarmament, Excellencies, peace, mercy and blessings of God be upon you.

At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Indonesia on assuming the responsibility of presiding over the current session of this Conference. I thank the Permanent Representative of the Republic of India for his efforts during his presidency, which resulted in qualitative initiatives, especially with regard to States joining the Conference as observers. In this context, I cannot fail to reiterate the thanks and appreciation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the support of members for its application to join the Conference as an observer.

The international community is concerned about the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament, which remains unable to adopt a clear and comprehensive programme of work that would allow it to carry out the tasks for which it was established. The Conference is the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament issues. With this in mind, the Kingdom continues to call for consideration of the reasons why the work of the Conference has stalled, for the avoidance of unilateral positions that impede opportunities to achieve collective security and for all States to demonstrate the necessary flexibility and political will to

revitalize the Conference. The Kingdom also supports the expansion of the membership of the Conference by reconsidering the mechanism for applications from observer States wishing to obtain member status in order to enhance the efficiency of this negotiating forum and open new horizons that could contribute to the revitalization of its work.

In this context, the Kingdom regrets that the request of the State of Palestine to join the work of the Conference on Disarmament as an observer was not accepted this year, as there is no legal justification to prevent it from doing so.

The Kingdom has attached great importance to acceding to the conventions that have resulted from the work of this Conference, especially the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention.

The Kingdom reaffirms its support for all regional and international efforts to ban all types of weapons of mass destruction and emphasizes the need for all States to contribute to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to help make the Middle East a region free of all weapons of mass destruction, which is a collective responsibility not limited to the countries of the region. The Kingdom also supports guaranteeing the right of States to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes within the framework of nuclear agreements and adherence to nuclear security standards.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reaffirms its position on the right to utilize outer space for peaceful purposes. Outer space belongs to the public, and no one has the right to use it for weapons purposes, as this poses a serious threat to international peace and security. The Kingdom also welcomes the intensification of cooperation to address current and future challenges in outer space and supports decisions that lead to the reduction of space threats through the development of policies consistent with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and relevant treaties and conventions. The Kingdom calls for continued efforts to achieve a balance between the security of outer space and the peaceful uses of outer space in order to ensure the well-being of humanity and the safety, security and sustainability of the outer space environment.

In conclusion, I reaffirm my Government's keenness to support efforts to adopt a comprehensive and balanced programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament. We look forward to the success of the current session and to the Conference's assuming its role, which has always been pivotal in the negotiation of international treaties and conventions in the field of disarmament. Thank you, Mr. President

The President: I thank Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud for his statement. Excellencies, distinguished delegates, I invite to the rostrum Ms. Marjolijn van Deelen, European Union Special Envoy for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation. I extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guest. You have the floor, Madam.

Ms. Van Deelen (Belgium): Thank you, Mr. President. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. As we convene at the high-level segment of the Conference on Disarmament, we face unprecedented security risks and uncertainties that threaten global peace and security. In an era dominated by Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, now ongoing for more than two years, and the situation in the Middle East and marked by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, our collective efforts to advance disarmament, non-proliferation and peace are more crucial than ever.

The European Union reiterates its resolute condemnation of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, which constitutes a manifest violation of the Charter of the United Nations and poses significant threats to the established disarmament architecture, as well as to global security, by eroding trust in multilateral institutions essential for progress. The European Union reaffirms its unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and its inherent right of self-defence against the Russian aggression. The European Union condemns Russia's actions, irresponsible nuclear rhetoric and threats to use nuclear force in its illegal, unjustified and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine, which further demonstrate how Russia's repeated actions undermine international peace and security. In addition, the European Union condemns the continued military support for Russia's war of aggression provided by Iran, Belarus and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It also urges all

countries not to provide material or other support for Russia's war of aggression. Russia and its leadership must be held fully accountable for waging this war and for other most serious crimes under international law.

With regard to the situation in the Middle East, we are very concerned about the humanitarian situation in Gaza and the suffering of the hostages. We reiterate our condemnation in the strongest possible terms of Hamas for its brutal and indiscriminate terrorist attacks across Israel. The European Union recalls that Israel has the right to defend itself in line with international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law. We reiterate our call on Hamas to immediately release all hostages without any precondition. The European Union and its member States underline the obligation to ensure the protection of all civilians at all times, in line with international humanitarian law. We deplore all loss of civilian life. We urge all sides to respect international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and note that there must be accountability for violations of international law. The European Union takes note of the 26 January order of the International Court of Justice, which is legally binding. We call for continued, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access and aid to reach those in need through humanitarian pauses that would lead to a sustainable solution. The European Union is determined to pursue its action in favour of regional stability and to avoid all risks of escalation.

Amid a deteriorating international security environment and increasing proliferation crises, there is growing concern about heightened risks. We encourage initiatives that can contribute to dialogue, confidence-building, transparency, verification activities, reporting and risk reduction, which are urgently required in the current context.

The European Union calls for intensified dialogue, including on strategic stability, increased transparency and confidence-building measures by all nuclear-weapon States to promote further progress in disarmament, also in line with action 5 of the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference action plan, which inter alia calls upon nuclear-weapon States to enhance transparency and increase mutual confidence. In this regard, the European Union acknowledges the efforts thus far by some nuclear-weapon States, including France, to demonstrate increased transparency on their doctrines and the nuclear weapons they possess and calls on others to do likewise. We reiterate the Union's strong, resolute and continuous support for all three pillars of the Treaty and will continue to promote comprehensive, balanced and substantive full implementation of the 2010 Review Conference action plan, which is a collective responsibility shared by all States parties to the Treaty without exception. We stress the need for concrete progress towards the full implementation of article VI, especially through the overall reduction in the global stockpile of nuclear weapons, taking into account the special responsibility of the States that possess the largest nuclear arsenals. The European Union strongly encourages seeking further reductions to their arsenals, including strategic and non-strategic, deployed and non-deployed nuclear weapons. We stress the need to implement all obligations under the Treaty and commitments from previous review conferences, including the need for concrete progress towards the full implementation of article VI, with the ultimate goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Given the rapid and extensive build-up of China's nuclear arsenal, we call on China to join future arms control agreements and to respond positively to calls for an arms control dialogue as a first step. The European Union urges China to immediately take measures to improve transparency on its nuclear weapons and doctrine, to refrain from further build-up, which is not in line with its commitments under the Treaty, and to pursue risk reduction measures. Pending a future agreement on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), we call on the only nuclear-weapon State that has not yet done so to declare and uphold an immediate moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. The EU stands ready to support the immediate commencement and early conclusion of negotiations in the Conference of Disarmament on the FMCT, in accordance with document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein. The European Union attaches the highest importance to the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms and calls on Russia to immediately return to full implementation of the Treaty and fulfil all of its obligations. We call for urgent negotiations of a successor

agreement. The European Union also deplores the unprecedented decision of Russia to revoke its ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

We want to welcome Robert Floyd, the Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, to the Conference on Disarmament. Promoting universal adherence to and entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty remains a key priority for the European Union.

Mr. President, as we look ahead, we will stand ready to work towards a comprehensive agreement for the Pact for the Future. This Pact should contribute to strengthening the international disarmament and non-proliferation regimes, address emerging threats and promote responsible State behaviour.

Improving space security today is paramount, as all States, be they spacefaring nations or not, are increasingly reliant on space systems and services. Satellites and other space-based assets, their corresponding ground segments and their associated data links are vital for the functioning of today's societies, as well as for progress on crucial global issues such as achieving the Sustainable Development Goals or the Pact for the Future. Therefore, when addressing space threats, the European Union reiterates the importance of an inclusive format and a multi-stakeholder approach, including engagement with international organizations, commercial actors and civil society representatives.

The European Union remains strongly committed to the prevention of an arms race in outer space as a general goal which is essential for strengthening international security and stability and for safeguarding the free exploration and long-term use of the space environment for peaceful purposes. International law, in particular the Charter of the United Nations, the United Nations treaties on outer space and international humanitarian law, is applicable to outer space. While reaffirming the importance of ultimately developing legally binding norms to prevent an arms race in outer space, the EU and its member States believe that developing norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours in space is the most pragmatic and immediate way forward to make progress on prevention of an arms race in outer space and improve space security using a step-by-step approach.

Given the escalating nature of international cyberthreats, it is more important than ever to deepen our collaboration with international partners and the multi-stakeholder community to promote a shared understanding of how international law applies in cyberspace, in particular the Charter of the United Nations, in the use of information and communication technologies, and how to further implement the United Nations framework for responsible State behaviour. We welcome the strong commitment of the international community to establish, no later than 2026, a permanent, inclusive and action-oriented mechanism to advance responsible State behaviour in the use of information and communication technologies.

The European Union encourages further international dialogue and cooperation to address the opportunities and challenges presented by artificial intelligence in the military domain, including questions related to biases such as gender, and we support efforts to exchange best practices and foster a common understanding of the legal and ethical implications. The European Union stands ready to actively engage in discussions in all relevant forums to further advance common understanding of this important issue.

The European Union remains committed to pursuing the work on lethal autonomous weapons systems within the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons with a view to ensuring that there is an outcome that reflects that human beings must make the decisions with regard to the use of lethal force, they must exert control over lethal autonomous weapons systems that they use, and they must remain accountable for decisions over the use of force in order to ensure compliance with international law, and in particular international humanitarian law, taking into account ethical considerations.

Mr. President, at the opening of its 2024 session, the Conference on Disarmament faced another setback in its work, when requests to participate in the Conference as observers were blocked. This situation is deeply troubling and raises further questions around the effective functioning of the Conference on Disarmament. It is also not in line with the core principle of multilateralism. Concerning the member States of the European Union that were

rejected, we condemn Russia's unprecedented objection based solely on political grounds, which demonstrates a significant obstruction to multilateralism. It represents a blatant disregard for the principle of inclusivity, and it undermines the credibility of the Conference on Disarmament as a single disarmament negotiation body and as a forum addressing crucial security challenges. The European Union firmly rejects Russia's decision, which erodes trust among participants and hinders collective efforts to tackle global security issues. We also strongly oppose Türkiye's repeated objections to Cyprus's request. These regrettable decisions also disregard the General Assembly resolution on the report of the Conference of Disarmament adopted by consensus last year.

We are very concerned that the Conference on Disarmament continues to be deadlocked, hindering its ability to make progress on disarmament issues. Strong political will is required from all members of the Conference if we are to break the impasse and put the Conference back on track. Let us seize this opportunity and work together to build a stronger, more effective Conference on Disarmament that meets the expectations of the international community in the twenty-first century. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank Ms. Marjolijn van Deelen for her statement. Excellencies, distinguished delegates, I invite to the rostrum Her Excellency Bonnie Jenkins, Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security of the United States of America. I extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guest. You have the floor, Madam.

Ms. Jenkins (United States of America): Mr. President, Secretary-General and distinguished representatives, it is an honour and a privilege to be here today before you at the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the incredible team here at the United States Mission to the Conference on Disarmament, led by Ambassador Bruce Turner, for the continued hard work and dedication. Indeed, they push ahead each day despite the obstacles, as the United States does not and will not accept that the Conference on Disarmament's best days are behind it.

We often hear that the Conference has not worked in some time and that it will not work. The former statement is a fact; the truth of the latter statement is entirely in our hands. I have spoken with many of you before, in both formal and informal settings, and I know you are all fully aware of the risks and instabilities we are facing, including Russia's dangerous nuclear rhetoric surrounding its invasion of Ukraine, its development of troubling space capabilities, and behaviour in contradiction to its arms control obligations; China's rapid and opaque nuclear weapons build-up; the refusal of Russia and the reluctance of China to fully engage in substantive arms control or risk reduction discussions to maintain strategic stability and reduce risk; Iran's continued expansion of its nuclear programme and insufficient cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency; the ongoing unlawful development by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of its weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programmes, in violation of multiple Security Council resolutions; and, last but not least, the horrific situation in Gaza.

Yet this daunting context is all the more reason for dialogue and for the United States to continue to be an advocate for building on established and widely accepted frameworks and methods. We welcome the efforts of the Conference's President over the past weeks to try to achieve a consensus on a programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament for the year 2024.

Sadly, this body continues to focus on divisions, rather than common ground and mutual benefit. As Ambassador Turner made clear just over a week ago, we are disappointed that the resulting draft decision on its work put before members barely calls for more than launching the most basic of discussions, falling far short of embodying the Conference on Disarmament's purpose and the demands we hear every day for action on disarmament.

While the United States was prepared to join consensus on the current draft, to at least begin work for the year, even this minimalist proposal apparently has thus far proved unable to garner full consensus. A generation ago, this body was actively engaged in parallel negotiations on multiple agenda items, driving towards treaties that represent the greatest accomplishments of the Conference on Disarmament. Lamenting lack of progress is easy; actually achieving progress is, as you all know, much harder. The United States knows that a programme of work with multiple lines of effort will require more resources and more time

from all of us. I do not believe that anyone here can argue that the current security context does not and will not require their commitment. Indeed, the threats we face require a greater level of ambition than existed 30 years ago.

The United States accepts that challenge, has the will to move forward and is ready to commit the necessary resources to support our ambitions. We believe the work should begin with the long-overdue work to negotiate a prohibition on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other explosive devices. Such a negotiation and subsequent legally binding treaty is an undeniable, necessary step in terms of advancing nuclear disarmament. It is also the logical first step in any process relating to control over such material. We know and understand that many delegations have different views on the scope of such a treaty but, in our view, we should be engaging in that debate as part of a vigorous negotiating process, the very kind that the Conference was designed to foster. We look forward to having such an opportunity and, rest assured, we will not stop in our pursuit of this goal.

The United States also sees other opportunities for action here in Geneva. At the seventy-eighth session of the First Committee, 164 Members of the United Nations joined us in supporting a new resolution calling upon States not to use radiological weapons and urging the Conference on Disarmament to adopt a programme of work that includes the commencement of negotiations to conclude a legally binding, multilateral prohibition on the use of radiological weapons by States. This is a common-sense step to increase global security and one that we should take together here at the Conference.

We also recognize that other countries have their own priorities, which means we must be ready to listen to each other. We also need to be ready to compromise rather than holding rigidly to positions that are as old as the paralysis that has long gripped this body. We are prepared to hear our colleagues and to adjust our approach accordingly. Specifically, over the past month, we have heard the call of other States to prioritize negative security assurances, as such assurances help bolster nuclear disarmament. Although we believe that regional nuclear-weapon-free zones are a practical way to achieve this, we are ready to demonstrate that we have heard this call, and we recognize that this priority of these States is as valid as our own.

As I have noted, the United States believes we should immediately commence negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. With the path cleared for negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, the United States would be prepared to discuss the establishment of an ad hoc committee to negotiate on effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Turning to the topic of outer space, the United States appreciates the need to continue discussions on preventing an arms race in outer space, in order to protect the security and stability of the domain. But we see a sustained effort to develop norms and responsible behaviours as the most effective way to reduce the risk of conflict. Additionally, we believe there is an imperative to focus on the Outer Space Treaty and ensure it remains at the core of international law in outer space.

My fellow representatives, we must not, cannot, continue to accept the status quo here. The stakes are simply too high to content ourselves with mediocrity and gridlock. We have in our hands the means to change the direction of the Conference on Disarmament, but it will require everyone here to contribute and to cooperate. With the opening of the 2024 Conference session, the United States has modelled the spirit of compromise and came to the table committed to finding a path forward in the Conference that rises to the level of ambition that this security environment requires. As this body considers its next steps, I hope that all of you will join us. Thank you.

The President: I thank Her Excellency Bonnie Jenkins for the statement. Excellencies, distinguished delegates, the Conference will now hear the address by His Excellency Carlos Márcio Bicalho Cozendey, Secretary for Multilateral Political Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil, through a pre-recorded video.

Mr. Bicalho Cozendey (Brazil) (*in a pre-recorded video statement*): Mr. President, it is with deep regret that I begin this intervention acknowledging that we seem to be going back to an era where conflicts were the norm. The promises brought about by the end of the cold war have largely been frustrated or broken, and the peace dividend is rapidly evaporating as military expenditures are on the rise. Attempts to normalize the modernization of arsenals and the development of new weapons have become pervasive. The nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime is fraying, and so is the broader institutional framework of collective security enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. There are growing and widespread doubts on the efficacy of the security assurances offered by these legal and political frameworks. Consequently, more and more States are seeking individual bilateral or regional solutions to safeguard their national security, thus breeding more insecurity and making multilateral security regimes more fragile.

The much-vaunted mantra of undiminished security for all is wielded to justify individual States' seeking to marginally enhance their perception of security, but inevitably prompting all others to feel much less safe. Chief among these choices is the new lease on life that many States are affording to nuclear deterrence doctrines, all of which rest upon a threat of use of nuclear weapons, implicit or explicit. Qualitative and quantitative expansion of nuclear arsenals, expansion of nuclear alliances, emergence of new nuclear-sharing arrangements, the introduction of new technologies that favour offensive postures, isolated or in tandem, drive political and technological choices, heightening the risk of nuclear conflict. As a consequence, the space for negative assurances and nuclear-free zones is being reduced.

All non-nuclear States need to state clearly that this unacceptable state of affairs derives from behaviour that is logically flawed, strategically destabilizing and morally indefensible. We non-nuclear-weapon States, which have consistently abided by our non-proliferation obligations, are the true guardians of the regime. It behoves us, as responsible actors, to step in and take the lead to help steer the international community away from the path of assured destruction.

Mr. President, turning now to the workings of the Conference on Disarmament, we welcome your initiative to convene a substantive dialogue on the need to overcome the stagnation in this body. In Brazil's view, the decades-long substantive paralysis in the Conference has its root causes in the fundamental disagreements and erosion of basic trust among key States. But the structure of the Conference and its rules of procedure have contributed to reinforcing and crystallizing those divides.

The rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament are based on an understanding of consensus that is far stricter than even those of the Security Council. This was meant to ensure that each of its member States would be able to protect its fundamental national security objectives. Instead, such rules are being abused to pre-emptively block even inconsequential discussions and minor procedural points. It seems obvious that the Conference on Disarmament needs new rules of procedure that would strike a better balance between its effectiveness and the protection of fundamental security interests of States.

In addition, the composition of the Conference, which is limited to States of military significance, was supposed to ensure its effectiveness but now has led to exclusion and insularity. As a result, the role of the Conference as the single multilateral negotiating forum devoted to disarmament eroded steadily in the past three decades. For all practical purposes, the Conference on Disarmament has been bypassed or replaced by a series of ad hoc deliberative or negotiating bodies established by the General Assembly, which were responsible for the few positive developments in this field since the mid-1990s. Worse, plurilateral and partial initiatives are taking crucial discussions out of the purview of the United Nations.

Therefore, the Conference on Disarmament needs a comprehensive and profound reform if it is to aspire to reclaim its original role and to have a meaningful impact on the global strategic environment. We cannot continue to wait indefinitely until a better strategic environment materializes in order to restore the effectiveness of the Conference on Disarmament. The Conference was meant to be an active promoter of security arrangements, not a passive beneficiary of such arrangements. The Conference has a unique potential to

function as a permanent forum for exchange of views among States on the fundamental issues affecting the disarmament and non-proliferation regimes. It should be able to do so in a comprehensive and integral manner, thus breaking the silos of each treaty's review, compliance and follow-up processes.

Mr. President, it is for these reasons that Brazil has been advocating, in coordination with the traditional penholders of the resolution on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, for the beginning of a process that will lead in time to the convening of a fourth special session. This would be the ideal avenue to bring about a comprehensive reform of the Conference and of the disarmament machinery as a whole. Although short-term and piecemeal approaches to reform would be welcome, they would hardly be able to generate the necessary impetus. And the fourth special session would need to preserve the solid foundation of common understanding laid out by the first special session, convened almost 50 years ago, while making the necessary adjustments to today's new realities. We look forward to contributing to this debate, both here and in New York, with a view to concrete steps to be taken at the Summit of the Future and in the next session of the First Committee. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank His Excellency Carlos Márcio Bicalho Cozendey for his statement. Excellencies, distinguished delegates, the Conference on Disarmament will now hear the address by His Excellency Burak Akçapar, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Türkiye, through a pre-recorded video.

Mr. Akçapar (Türkiye) (*in a pre-recorded video statement*): Excellencies, dear colleagues, let me first congratulate Indonesia on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. It is a pleasure for me to address this august body.

Unfortunately, we are meeting in particularly challenging times. The global security environment is in a precipice. We must cooperate to stop sliding backwards. The war in Ukraine is still raging after two years. I should reaffirm once again our principled position in support of Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, as well as our commitment to upholding dialogue and diplomacy for ending the conflict, preventing escalation and ensuring global food security and safe and free navigation.

Since October last year, we are also witnessing catastrophic human suffering in Gaza. The entire civilian population of Gaza, and now Gazans who took refuge in Rafah, are indiscriminately targeted in gross violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. Immediate and full implementation of the order of the International Court of Justice for provisional measures is essential. Regional spillover is a risk. A prompt ceasefire is urgently required. We continue to firmly believe that a lasting solution to the Palestinian conflict lies in a two-State vision, in line with United Nations parameters.

Because of the extraordinary global security environment, it is critical to uphold the existing arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation instruments and platforms. We cannot risk further worsening. As the only multilateral negotiation framework for disarmament, it is imperative to achieve positive and result-oriented work at the Conference on Disarmament. We look forward to working together to restore the central role of the Conference, as well as for the swift adoption of a balanced and comprehensive programme of work. Momentum is of the essence. We are confident that the Conference on Disarmament possesses the necessary mandate, the rules of procedure and membership composition to deliver.

Looking ahead, I would like to touch upon some issues that matter for the Conference. It is a fact that nuclear rhetoric is on the rise; that necessitates caution and restraint, rather than fuelling such rhetoric. As such, continued dialogue among the five permanent members of the Security Council, including for nuclear risk reduction, is critical. Upholding the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime, as well as efforts for its universalization, is even more important in this review cycle than ever before. The role of the International Atomic Energy Agency, with its robust verification regime, is crucial. In the current NPT review cycle, it will not be possible to ignore, as well, Israel's almost formal confession of being a nuclear-weapon-possessing State outside the NPT. That is critical, also to be able to make progress towards creating a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. We will continue to support efforts

that could enable progress for the reactivation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. We are concerned at the unprecedented increase in missile launches and tests, in both quantity and type, by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea since last year. We reiterate our call for the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by all annex 2 States for its entry into force. Until then, preserving the global norm against nuclear testing is paramount.

We continue to support practical and inclusive measures, such as the start of negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and verifiable treaty to prohibit the production of fissile material. We attach the utmost importance to safeguarding the right of unrestricted access to and use of outer space for peaceful purposes. We will continue to support initiatives aimed at developing a behaviour-based approach to reduce space threats. We will continue to constructively engage in the working group on strengthening of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. We continue to support the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons as the right forum to address matters related to emerging technologies or lethal autonomous weapons systems, given its extensive expertise.

Excellencies, topics of value to the Conference on Disarmament are lengthy, yet covering them all in a single statement here would not be possible. I would like to conclude by assuring you of Türkiye's full support to advancing the work of this precious Conference. As the Antalya Diplomacy Forum will debate next week, we need to advance diplomacy in times of turmoil. Your work matters, perhaps more so than ever before.

The President: I thank His Excellency Burak Akçapar for this statement. Excellencies, distinguished delegates, the Conference will now hear the address by Mr. Todd McClay, Associate Minister for Foreign Affairs of New Zealand, through a pre-recorded video.

Mr. McClay (New Zealand) (in a pre-recorded video statement): President, Secretary-General, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, thank you for the opportunity to put on record the New Zealand Government's views. Though I might represent a different New Zealand coalition Government than the one that last addressed this body, New Zealand's stance on nuclear disarmament remains the same. We are acutely concerned about the deep slide we are in. Progress towards the shared goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world has not only faltered – it has begun to reverse.

As High Representative Nakamitsu described it, there has not been a time since the cold war that the risk of nuclear weapons' being used has been so high and, at the same time, the regime intended to prevent such use so fragile. The salience of nuclear weapons in some military doctrines is expanding. Investment to modernize arsenals and, in some concerning cases, increase arsenals is likely to lead to the further entrenchment of nuclear weapons for decades to come. A mistrust has grown and, in the absence of any discernible progress to disarm, the seeming incentive persists for the have nots to join the haves and acquire these terrible weapons.

New Zealand has long understood what it would mean for the world, even in our remote part of the Pacific, if nuclear weapons were again used. We continue to find untenable the arguments made, almost always by those with nuclear weapons or those seemingly protected by them, that now is not the time for nuclear disarmament. Well, history teaches us that nuclear disarmament and the arms control measures can be forged in times of crisis or heightened tension. This is when the risks of not doing so are sometimes clearest. We need only look at the cold war. The grand bargain at the heart of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was struck only a few years after the world stared into the nuclear abyss during the Cuban missile crisis. Throughout the succeeding period, then, despite the chill of the cold war, important arms control agreements were negotiated and implemented. This was based on the realization, even crystallized in a joint statement in 1985 by United States President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.

It would be a disservice to those achievements to suggest that that era was somehow easier or simpler. It is incumbent upon us all, but most of all on the nuclear-weapon States, to arrest this slide we are currently in. I repeat here New Zealand's call for their

universalization and full implementation of the NPT, as well as the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons which complements it.

As with nuclear disarmament, our collective security across the board rests on upholding the international rules that we have all agreed by everyone and at all times, irrespective of size and situation. Those rules are under sustained pressure everywhere we look: the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention, Security Council resolutions and the raft of humanitarian disarmament treaties that knit together protections for civilians and international humanitarian law more generally. We must protect those rules and norms because if you look around the world today, life depends on them.

President, I conclude with a remark on the Conference on Disarmament. This body was created with a specific mandate to negotiate disarmament agreements – in essence, to make us and the people we serve safer. It is still within our collective power to return this forum to meaningful work, going beyond mere delivery of statements to negotiating outcomes that have a real-world impact. The perilous environment we all find ourselves in demands nothing less from us. Thank you.

The President: I thank Mr. Todd McClay for his statement. Excellencies, distinguished delegates, please allow me to suspend the meeting in order to allow time for our next distinguished guest to arrive.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: The meeting is resumed. I invite to the rostrum Her Excellency Ms. Elina Valtonen, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland. I extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guest. You have the floor, Madam.

Ms. Valtonen (Finland): Thank you, Mr. President. Finland's commitment to the international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation regimes remains unwavering. We denounce all violations of the existing regimes. They reduce predictability and trust. This is a dangerous dismantlement of multilateralism and of the rules-based international order.

Finland has strongly condemned Russia's illegal, unprovoked and brutal war of aggression against Ukraine from the very first day. We continue to do so. The Russian invasion of a sovereign country is a violation of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations. Finland will continue its unwavering support of Ukraine for as long as needed.

We are concerned about Iran's lack of cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency. This casts a shadow of doubt on the nature of Iran's nuclear programme. We are furthermore alarmed by Iran's destabilizing actions in the region.

We condemn the continuing missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. These are a grave violation of Security Council resolutions. The reckless behaviour of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continues to endanger international and regional peace and security. We also condemn the arms sales by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in support of Russia's illegal war in Ukraine.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is successful. It is topical and States parties are strongly committed to it. A comprehensive and swift implementation of all Treaty obligations is in the interest of all States. We commend the eleventh NPT review cycle in Vienna last summer, under the able chairmanship of my compatriot, Ambassador Jarmo Viinanen. This year, the Preparatory Committee will meet here in Geneva. The agenda and the issues for the review cycle will be quite well set after that. We cannot allow a third consecutive NPT review process without an agreed outcome. Good ingredients for such an outcome have already been presented, and more will be forthcoming. A negotiated outcome to the NPT review process is always difficult to achieve. However, it is possible with political leadership, creative diplomacy and committed management of the review process. Let us make this a reality in 2026.

Nuclear risk reduction is an important ingredient in the NPT review. Last year, the topic was also discussed here in the Conference on Disarmament during the Finnish presidency. Reducing risks of nuclear weapon use can only be beneficial for every nation. Risk reduction is not a substitute, not the prerequisite for disarmament, but it can reduce

tensions, increase trust and dispel misconceptions. It can thus improve the prospects for nuclear disarmament, as well as complement disarmament efforts.

For Finland, the importance of the Conference on Disarmament is clear. It has played a unique role in advancing international peace and security over the years, as the single multilateral negotiation forum for disarmament matters. It is just as clear, however, that a serious effort is needed to revitalize the Conference. It is high time to make sure that the Conference can once again serve as a functioning forum for negotiation.

Finland regrets that the Conference was unable to reach a consensus on the participation of observers. In accordance with the principles of inclusivity and multilateralism, all States willing to do so should have the possibility to participate in the work of the Conference as observers.

I hope it will be possible to agree on a comprehensive programme of work this year. We think that the Conference on Disarmament would benefit from a multiannual programme. This would ensure continuity of work at the Conference.

We also once again call on the Conference on Disarmament to start negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other explosive devices, in accordance with the existing document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein. Ending fissile material production and controlled management of existing stocks are important steps towards nuclear disarmament and the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons. In the meantime, it would also help to curb nuclear proliferation.

Finland is pleased that it was possible to agree on a resolution on radiological weapons at the General Assembly. We see starting negotiations on a new treaty on radiological weapons as an excellent new avenue for the Conference on Disarmament.

Agreeing on modalities for disarmament negotiations, let alone successfully negotiating any new treaties, requires determination and political will. A certain level of confidence is a precondition before any prospects for success can emerge. In a situation where a full-scale war of aggression is being waged in Europe by a nuclear Power and a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, it is primarily the responsibility of that Power to start taking steps to restore confidence. Meanwhile, we all need to commit to defend, promote and further strengthen the multilateral arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. In these dangerous times, multilateralism is needed more than ever. Also, the Conference on Disarmament must be ready when the time comes. Thank you very much.

The President: I thank Her Excellency Ms. Elina Valtonen for her statement. Excellencies, distinguished delegates I invite to the rostrum Her Excellency Ms. Lolwah Rashid Al-Khater, Minister of State for International Cooperation of Qatar, and I extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guest. You have the floor, Madam.

Ms. Al-Khater (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): In the name of God the merciful, the compassionate – Mr. President, Excellencies, peace and blessings be upon you. Allow me at the outset to congratulate the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Indonesia on his assumption of the post of President of the Conference on Disarmament. We are confident of his ability and competence to discharge his responsibilities in the best way possible. I would also like to commend the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva and Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament for her efforts and continued commitment to support the work of the Conference to advance the objectives for which it was established, primarily the realization of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Multilateralism in disarmament guarantees collective security and gives rise to cooperation and agreement on monitoring, verification and compliance systems. This was perhaps the ultimate goal of establishing the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament. Unfortunately, after more than two decades, the Conference is still unable to agree on a programme of work due to the lack of political will on the part of a number of countries.

The increasing challenges to international security, the growing crises and conflicts in the international environment, the escalation of geopolitical tensions, the accelerated return

to the nuclear arms race and the threat of the use of nuclear weapons make it imperative for the international community to work harder, strengthen mutual trust and demonstrate the political will to overcome differences and embark on the programme of work for which the Conference on Disarmament was established: the negotiation of important multilateral and non-discriminatory disarmament instruments with priority given to nuclear disarmament. This will contribute to restoring confidence in the credibility of the Conference and its ability to support and promote international peace and security.

The State of Qatar strongly condemns the threats made by the Israeli Minister of Heritage last November to bomb the besieged and impoverished Gaza Strip with nuclear weapons, which clearly indicates that Israel is in possession of nuclear weapons and is willing to use them against unarmed civilians whose land it has occupied for decades in flagrant violation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). That statement also exposed the reason for the refusal by Israel to join the efforts of countries in the region based on international resolutions to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. We call on the relevant international organizations, including the International Atomic Energy Agency, to assume their responsibilities with regard to the statement and its consequences.

The State of Qatar also condemns the genocidal war being waged by the Israeli forces against the Gaza Strip, their use of heavy and lethal weapons that are internationally prohibited and the deliberate and indiscriminate targeting of civilian facilities, especially hospitals, schools, places of worship and homes, in flagrant violation of relevant international laws and conventions. We take this opportunity to once again call on the international community to take all measures for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, a lifting of all restrictions impeding humanitarian access, a stop to forced displacement, and the protection of civilians in accordance with international law and international humanitarian law.

Mr. President, based on its commitment to its responsibilities towards the maintenance of international peace and security and its belief in multilateralism as the fundamental choice for addressing the most serious threats to our common security, the State of Qatar has acceded to several major international agreements in the field of disarmament and arms control, most notably the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The National Committee for the Prohibition of Weapons was established in 2004 to provide advice to the competent governmental authorities in all matters related to the implementation of the country's obligations under the international conventions and to develop and run the necessary programmes to raise awareness and educate the general public about the dimensions of disarmament and arms control efforts and the human, economic and environmental effects of the arms race. The Doha Regional Centre for Training on Conventions on Weapons of Mass Destruction, inaugurated in 2012, continues to provide training services at the national, regional and international levels. It is the only centre of its kind in the Middle East, and its objectives focus on providing capacity-building programmes and empowering institutions to comply with international obligations in the fields of security and non-proliferation.

The State of Qatar affirms the legitimate right of all States to the peaceful use of atomic energy in strict compliance with the international conventions in force and the standards and procedures of the International Atomic Energy Agency. In this regard, Qatar has adopted appropriate legislation to enhance the safety and security of radioactive materials, ratified the 2005 amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and passed the Act on the National System for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials of 2018. It also acceded to the Convention on Nuclear Safety in 2020, and its accession entered into force in March 2021. I would like to mention that, in the first quarter of 2024, the State of Qatar intends to hold a national forum, in which all relevant State institutions will participate, on the peaceful uses of atomic energy and their role in national development with the aim of enhancing knowledge of nuclear technologies and their peaceful uses.

The State of Qatar agrees with the demands of many States that the Conference on Disarmament should expand its membership in line with its rules of procedure. In this regard, the State of Qatar reiterates its desire to become a State member of the Conference on Disarmament because it is convinced that the expansion of the membership of the Conference

will make it more representative, activate its mechanisms and allow it to benefit from the experience of new States in the field of disarmament.

In conclusion, the State of Qatar reiterates its commitment to international mechanisms and measures aimed at disarmament and arms control and will continue its efforts to maintain regional and international peace and security. Thank you very much.

The President: I thank Her Excellency Ms. Lolwah Rashid Al-Khater for the statement. I invite to the rostrum Her Excellency Anna Jardfelt, Permanent Representative and head of the delegation of the Permanent Mission of Sweden in Geneva. I extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guest. You have the floor, Madam.

Ms. Jardfelt (Sweden): President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, I am pleased to address the Conference on Disarmament at this year's high-level segment. Sweden fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. I would like to make the following national remarks.

President, some of the crucial milestones of the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture have been agreed right here by our predecessors in the Conference on Disarmament. Yet for well over two decades, the Conference has not seen any major negotiations take place. In fact, the Conference has neither been able to agree on a true programme of work nor reach consensus on updating the rules of procedure to make them gender-neutral and in line with the twenty-first century. These shortcomings are not foregone conclusions, nor are they a result of poor efforts. It is due to the lack of political will. We cannot disregard the unprecedented events marking the opening of this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament, when 16 observer requests were blocked. This situation is deeply troubling and goes against the core principle of multilateralism. It is up to us to break this vicious circle and allow the Conference to advance on substance. The credibility of the disarmament architecture and the Conference as a whole is at stake.

President, the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Sweden will continue to promote the full implementation of all obligations under the Treaty, including article VI. Concrete progress is needed more than ever if we are to reach the ultimate goal of achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. Sweden was disappointed by the outcome of the first session of the Preparatory Committee last year. Still, the useful exchanges there and during the working group on further strengthening the Treaty are welcome steps that can pave the way for concrete progress. Reducing the risk of nuclear weapons use is urgent and of utmost importance. In this regard, transparency, accountability and other confidence-building measures can decrease tensions, increase trust and dispel misconceptions, thus improving the conditions for disarmament, as well as complement disarmament efforts.

Through the Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament, Sweden, together with a cross-regional group of partners, has underlined the necessity of further progress in disarmament. Stressing that disarmament commitments from earlier NPT review conferences remain valid, the Initiative has put forward proposals to mobilize political support and advance on disarmament. We must not take the Treaty for granted but instead harness the strength of our joint commitments and build on prior achievements during this eleventh review cycle. The upcoming meeting of the Preparatory Committee later this summer is an opportunity that we must seize.

President, just over two years ago, Russia launched its illegal, unjustified and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine. Sweden condemns in the strongest terms Russia's brutal invasion and reaffirms its unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. Russia's actions are flagrant violations of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, and its threat to use nuclear weapons is irresponsible and unacceptable. We are horrified by the systematic targeting of civilians and civilian objects in complete disregard for international humanitarian law. We urge Russia to immediately cease all military activity and withdraw its troops from the entire territory of Ukraine.

President, since last October, we are witnessing developments in the Middle East that are deeply worrying. Sweden supports Israel's legitimate right to defend itself against Hamas

in accordance with international law, including international humanitarian law. All hostages must be released immediately and unconditionally. In view of the catastrophic situation in Gaza, Sweden believes that a humanitarian ceasefire is necessary and we, as well as the European Union, see no other peaceful way forward than a negotiated two-State solution, where Israel and Palestine can coexist in peace and security.

President, international peace and security are the responsibility of all States. Yet nuclear-weapon States bear a special responsibility for nuclear arms control and disarmament. We recognize the constructive approach taken by the United States, the United Kingdom and France to avoid nuclear escalation. We welcome the efforts of the United States to resume activities within the New START and to launch negotiations on a new arms control framework. At the same time, we deeply regret the announcement that Russia suspends its engagement with the New START and we call on Russia to reconsider its decision.

The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the conclusion of negotiations of a fissile material cut-off treaty remain tasks for the international community to deliver on. Sweden urges all remaining annex 2 States to ratify the Treaty and we condemn the unprecedented decision of Russia to revoke its ratification. Pending entry into force, existing moratoria on nuclear test explosions must be maintained.

In addition, and pending a fissile material cut-off treaty in force, we call on all States concerned, including China, to declare and uphold an immediate moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices.

Sweden regards outer space as a global common to be used for the benefit of all and underlines the applicability of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, to all activities in outer space. Sweden is strongly committed to safeguarding the long-term use of the space environment for peaceful purposes and to preventing an arms race in outer space. We continue to work with partners to reduce space threats and promote the responsible use of space, both in multilateral settings and bilaterally. Sweden supports the efforts in United Nations disarmament forums to advance norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviour in outer space, while not excluding a future new legally binding agreement.

President, our work on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation does not exist in a vacuum. Therefore we must continue to engage the younger generation and stand up for gender equality, as well as the right of civil society to participate in our joint efforts without undue restrictions and make their voices heard.

In conclusion, in the deteriorating security environment we find ourselves in today, we must be ambitious but realistic. It is time for the Conference on Disarmament to take responsibility, show political will and overcome the divide that has marked our work in the past years. We are ready to do our part. I thank you.

The President: I thank Her Excellency Anna Jardfelt for her statement.

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, please allow me to suspend the meeting in order to allow time for our next distinguished guest to arrive. It will be a couple of minutes.

The meeting was suspended at 11.50 a.m. and resumed at 12.15 p.m.

The President: I invite to the rostrum His Excellency Luis Gilberto Murillo Urrutia, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia. I extend a welcome to our distinguished guest. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Murillo Urrutia (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much. Mr. Febrian Ruddyard, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Indonesia and President of the Conference on Disarmament, Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva and Secretary-General of the Conference, representatives of the States member of the Conference and distinguished colleagues.

(*spoke in English*)

The Colombian Government, under President Gustavo Petro Urrego, advocates for the preservation of life and peace, both domestically and in foreign affairs. We strongly support disarmament and believe it is the cornerstone of peace. It is essential to prioritize

investment in education, welfare and development, which are the pillars of peace. It is also very important and necessary to reduce spending on war. Our objective is to secure a peaceful future for the upcoming generations.

(spoke in Russian)

I wish to state that the Government of Colombia led by President Gustavo Petro Urrego is pursuing a progressive policy. The aim of this policy is to support life and maintain peace both at home and in its foreign policy. We firmly believe that disarmament is fundamental to peace. We should invest more in education, health, welfare, development and the other foundations of peace, and we should spend less on war. We need to spend more on peace. Our goal is to ensure that future generations live in peace. I will say it again: our goal is to ensure that future generations live in peace.

(spoke in Spanish)

The progressive foreign policy of the Government of the President of Colombia is based on three pillars: diplomacy for life, nature and an effective response to the climate crisis; diplomacy for peace and peacebuilding; and diplomacy for the deepening and strengthening of democracy within a framework of inclusion and social justice.

The experience of Colombia with conflict and violence has forced us to look for new ways to resolve these problems and to engage in an important undertaking at the international level, which is to work for total peace beyond our borders. On behalf of the Government of Colombia, I would like to make three points to the Conference today.

First, Colombia will continue to speak out about the need for general and complete disarmament. Nearly 54 years have passed since the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, but progress towards fulfilling the obligation to disarm remains on hold. There are almost 13,000 nuclear weapons, which continue to play an influential role in defence policies and which form part of and are gaining prominence in the military doctrines of the nuclear-weapon States, not to mention the problem of illegal trafficking in small arms and light weapons that affects our countries. All nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States must, within the framework of our international capabilities and obligations, renew our political will and diplomatic determination to re-establish urgent and truly effective measures for the total elimination of nuclear weapons, as this is the absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use.

Second, with an international situation characterized by heightened political tensions, and in view of the critical scope that ongoing international conflicts and the nuclear threat may attain, renewed dialogue is more necessary than ever. It is through dialogue, solidarity and empathy rather than through war or armed confrontation that we will be able to move towards a safer world. A quarter of a century has passed, and our differences have prevented the Conference from adopting an annual programme of work. Nor have we been able to negotiate any other international disarmament and non-proliferation instrument. Colombia has just participated in an international conference on security in Munich, Germany, where we proposed to the world a democratic pact that would arise from the dialogue between the global South and North and serve as a tool for preventing humanity from drifting further towards barbarism, war and extinction. This democratic pact serves as a warning about the need to comply with, implement and universalize international legal instruments on nuclear disarmament and to revitalize international institutions and multilateralism, starting with this Conference.

Third, in Colombia, women, people of African descent, Indigenous Peoples and campesinos are recognized as agents of change in our societies, which is why we are also convinced that their participation in the disarmament agenda must be guaranteed and promoted and that the gender perspective must be incorporated in all aspects of disarmament.

Lastly, we know that there can be no total peace without peace with nature. For this reason, Colombia will be hosting the sixteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in October 2024. We will seek to establish a new global pact in which discussions about nature and nature-based solutions, which some call natural climate solutions, light the way to a more prosperous, just and harmonious world. We therefore invite you to build this path from Cali, Colombia, at the sixteenth Conference of the Parties.

Thank you.

The President: I thank his Excellency Luis Gilberto Murillo Urrutia for his statement. Excellencies, distinguished delegates, I invite to the rostrum His Excellency José Manuel Albares Bueno, Minister for Foreign Affairs, the European Union and Cooperation of Spain. I extended a warm welcome to our distinguished guest. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Albares Bueno (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, the Conference on Disarmament was born at a time when nuclear arsenals were seriously threatening international security and humanity itself. In this forum, agreements on the prohibition of chemical weapons and nuclear testing were reached. Today, international peace and security are once again under serious threat and this Conference is central to restoring international peace and security.

The war waged by Russia against Ukraine is a frontal assault on the principles of the United Nations and international security. We reiterate our support for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine in coordination with our partners and allies. Violence is also on the rise in the Middle East following the terrorist attacks by Hamas. Israel has the right to defend itself, provided that it always respects international law and international humanitarian law. The Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace and measures to promote disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control are fundamental tools for international peace and security. It is more necessary than ever to support the international disarmament architecture, and this Conference must play a leading role in that process. You can always count on the active and constructive participation of Spain and the diplomacy of peace that inspires its foreign policy.

Irresponsible nuclear rhetoric has brought us back to a time that we thought we had left behind. Following the failure to achieve consensus at the last two Non-Proliferation Treaty review conferences, the current review cycle must be brought to a successful conclusion and decisive steps must be taken towards the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. These steps must be taken within the framework of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, on the basis of previous commitments and in a progressive and realistic manner. Spain advocates this approach through its active participation in the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament. It seeks to build consensus and identify specific steps that would lead to disarmament. We invite other States to study these proposals, which are optimistic and ambitious. We condemn the revocation by the Russian Federation of its ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We ask that it continue to respect the object and purpose of the Treaty, to which it remains a signatory. The entry into force of the Treaty remains one of our priorities. We support diplomatic efforts to bring the nuclear situation of Iran to a negotiated resolution and we urge Iran to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency and to return to compliance with its commitments. We are greatly concerned about developments in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We urge its authorities to respect Security Council resolutions, to refrain from further missile testing and to engage in dialogue leading to joint, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization.

We welcome the establishment of the working group established under the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. We consider the work on verification measures to be a priority, which should enable us to move towards the approval of a verification protocol.

Spain will fully support the work of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Those responsible for using such weapons must be brought to justice, as Spain argued at the most recent Review Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Technological developments give rise to new security challenges that must be addressed in the context of disarmament. We have supported the open-ended working group on reducing space threats from the outset and we welcome the efforts made by the United Nations to create a working group to further develop the standards and measures that have already been adopted.

Artificial intelligence is also set to change our lives, including in the military sphere. Spain is paying great attention to all the procedures regulating its use in the military field, and it contributes to the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging

Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems with the aim of elaborating a legal instrument regulating their use.

However, technological developments and the threat posed by technology at the service of the arms race are not causing us to overlook other conventional weapons that have always had a direct impact on civilians, such as anti-personnel mines. Among other initiatives, on the occasion of the Conference on Humanitarian Demining in Ukraine, which took place last October in Zagreb, I announced that €1.5 million would be donated to humanitarian demining in Ukraine. With this donation, Spain has demonstrated the importance of the humanitarian demining conventions, which we have always supported.

Our efforts continue to be geared towards strengthening and universalizing the Arms Trade Treaty, drawing on our work under the Treaty to support the open-ended working group on conventional ammunition and thereby contributing to better management of these materials. We have worked hard to promote the universalization of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Conscious of the danger to peace, security and global development posed by the illicit trade and diversion of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, Spain continues to support the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

I would like to highlight the importance of export control regimes for military and dual-use equipment and technologies as a means of preventing them from falling into the wrong hands. We value the crucial contribution made by these regimes to ensuring a safer world in which the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the diversion of conventional weapons are prevented.

The Conference has a fundamental role to play in these efforts. We would have liked a programme of work to have been adopted so that we could start discussing key issues, such as negotiations to adopt a fissile material cut-off treaty, and we find it regrettable that countries that wish to contribute to this forum as observers have been excluded from the dialogue. We need this forum to progress. I believe that it is still possible to move forward, at least if we have a working structure that enables us to move closer to negotiating initiatives that might revitalize it because, at times like the present, our peace and collective security demand that we take a broad and inclusive approach to the promotion of disarmament that, informed by contributions from all stakeholders and by a gender perspective based on the women and peace and security agenda, always puts people at the centre of the action.

The Conference, which is a key institution for international security and, above all, a project for promoting coexistence, was born at humanity's darkest hour as a commitment to the values of peace and justice in the international order. The Conference was born out of the conviction that the strong must be more just in their use of force and the just must always be strong in their demand for justice. Today more than ever, we need this commitment, and we need the values of peace and justice that this institution represents.

Thank you.

The President: I thank His Excellency. Please.

Mr. Albares Bueno (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I have the honour of speaking on behalf of Albania, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia, the United States of America, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Sweden, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and my own country, Spain.

The high-level segment of the Conference on Disarmament is taking place at a very painful time: it is 10 years since the start of the war waged by Russia against Ukraine and two years since Russia began its full-scale invasion of the country. The brutal war waged by Russia against Ukraine constitutes a blatant violation of international law in contravention of the basic principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. This aggression directly threatens disarmament and non-proliferation initiatives, particularly those stemming from the

Conference, and directly undermines international peace and the global security architecture. The irresponsible nuclear rhetoric resorted to by Russia may lead to increased tensions. The actions of Russia are putting the global community at risk as they contribute to food and energy insecurity and have a devastating impact on the most vulnerable people around the world. We reaffirm this in our unequivocal condemnation of the vicious attacks carried out by Russia on the territory of Ukraine, its civilian population and key infrastructure. Since early 2024, Russia has stepped up its campaign of systematic air strikes on Ukrainian cities, bringing further destruction and causing hardship and suffering to millions of civilians, including women and children. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), about 1.5 million children are at risk of depression, more than 5 million children have had their schooling interrupted and thousands of Ukrainian children have been illegally deported to Russia. We salute the people of Ukraine for their unwavering strength, courage and resistance in the face of Russian aggression. We reiterate the repeated calls made by the overwhelming majority of the membership of the General Assembly for Russia to immediately cease its hostilities and attacks on Ukrainian civilian targets and key infrastructure and to immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all its military forces from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. We reaffirm our full support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, as well as its inherent right to defend itself from the illegal attack by Russia.

In the past year, despite the strategic failure of Russia to destroy Ukraine and subjugate its people, we have seen Russia repeatedly violate international standards and commitments that are essential to our collective security. We roundly condemn the eagerness of Russia to acquire armaments from Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the military support provided by these countries for the Russian campaign. Iran has routinely supplied Russia with armed unmanned aerial vehicles that have been used to kill civilians in Ukraine. The continual supply of ballistic missiles to Russia by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea constitutes a flagrant violation of the arms embargoes promoted by the United States and set out in Security Council resolutions. We urge Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to put an immediate end to these actions and we call on all countries to refrain from supporting the war of aggression waged by Russia. The withdrawal of Russia from its ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, its withdrawal from the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, its purported legally invalid suspension of the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START) and its public rejection of a bilateral offer to maintain stability demonstrate its continued disregard for arms control, the transparency that would help reduce the risk of conflict and its commitments under the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

As members of this body, we denounce the fact that Russia has arbitrarily prevented the participation in the Conference of 14 States Members of the United Nations solely for political reasons. Actions such as these undermine the principles of inclusiveness and multilateralism and erode the credibility of the Conference as a vital and inclusive forum for negotiating disarmament instruments. We urge Russia to stop the systematic attempts that it has made over the past year to spread disinformation and abuse procedure with a view to blocking the disarmament forums of the multilateral system. We condemn the announcement of plans to deploy Russian nuclear warheads in Belarus. This is a particularly destabilizing decision, as Belarus is continuing to make its territory and its logistical and transport infrastructure available for Russia to attack Ukraine. We urge the Belarusian authorities to immediately end their support for the war of aggression waged by Russia against Ukraine and to reverse decisions that can only contribute to aggravating tensions in the region. The consequences of the illegal invasion undertaken by Russia continue to give rise to profound concern over nuclear safety, security and safeguards, as does the ongoing presence of Russian forces at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, which increases the risk of accidents. We fully support the efforts of the International Atomic Energy Agency to address nuclear safety, security and safeguards in Ukraine, and we call on Russia to adhere to the Agency's seven pillars and the five principles for nuclear safety at the Zaporizhzhia plant formulated by its Director General, as well as the relevant resolutions of the Agency's Board of Governors and General Conference.

Russia should immediately cease all its actions in and against Ukrainian nuclear facilities and withdraw its military and other personnel from the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. As the 2024 session of the Conference begins, we support international initiatives undertaken at the highest level to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine, based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We stand firm in our commitment to upholding the Charter and international law and promoting effective multilateralism for a safer and more sustainable world.

Thank you.

The President: I thank His Excellency José Manuel Albares Bueno for his statement. Excellencies, distinguished delegates, I invite to the rostrum Dr. Robert Floyd, Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. I extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guest. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Floyd (Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization): Mr. President, Ambassador Ruddyard, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, I have two reasons to greet and thank Ambassador Ruddyard. First, because he is chairing the Conference on Disarmament. But second, because his country, Indonesia, was the most recent annex 2 country to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. It was a major contribution and I thank the people of Indonesia and intend to do that this afternoon through a meeting with Minister Retno Marsudi to pass on my appreciation.

That was one success. Let us reflect on another. As you may know, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty itself was negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament. Here, Geneva, is its birthplace. The people of the world owe a debt of gratitude to you and your diplomatic forebears who walked these corridors. What a success for the Conference on Disarmament this Treaty represents, a spectacular practical success, a success everyone can understand, a gift to humanity, a gift to collective peace and security.

Before the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was opened for signature in 1996, the world suffered over 2,000 nuclear weapons tests in the air, on the land, underground and in the oceans. Following the Treaty, there have been fewer than one dozen tests. What a change. Well, not a change – a transformation for the better. But why such success? Above all, because the Treaty is fair and transparent. The Treaty sets a target, a global network of 337 monitoring facilities. It can detect a test anywhere on Earth almost immediately. Three hundred and six facilities, over 90 per cent of the target total, are up and running. They monitor seismic activity, sound waves in the ocean, ultra-low-frequency sound waves in the atmosphere, as well as radioactive particles in the atmosphere. Their data streams to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization in Vienna around the clock. Crucially, all that data is not secret or privileged; it is available to all State signatories. We all share in this Treaty. It is a unique shared global resource that supports all sorts of important civil and scientific work: earthquake monitoring, climate change research, ocean studies, tsunami warning, even helping find lost aircraft and submarines.

One of my own priorities is to help many more States build their capacity so they can receive and use the data – access and capability – so that all States, global North and global South alike, can use and benefit from this data for whatever interests they might have. That is why I have set up the National Data Centres for All initiative and it has had an excellent response. More and more States are setting up their own national data centres and accessing all of this data. We are getting more support directly into regions that need it and we are doing that using more of our official languages. Access, capacity, capability.

It is clear why this fair and transparent Treaty enjoys huge international support and respect; 187 States have signed it, 177 have ratified it. In the last two years, we have seen eight States ratify the Treaty and one State sign the Treaty on its way to ratifying it. We are working hard to achieve even more signatures and ratifications, and they are coming, maybe even next week will be another one.

But as we all know, there is unfinished business. Yes, the International Monitoring System is magnificent. It lets the world know very quickly that a large explosion has happened and where it has happened. But only when the Treaty enters into force can we all benefit from its full suite of verification mechanisms. Entry into force brings the consultation

and clarification mechanism and confidence-building measures and, importantly, it allows on-site inspections, the crucial practical way agreed upon in the Treaty to confirm that an explosion is or is not a nuclear explosion.

We here today know all too well that the international security scene is difficult, probably worse than difficult. Yet everywhere I go, including our Article XIV conference in New York in September last year and the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Kampala just last month, I hear the same thing. We need the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to come into force. This is what almost all the States around the world want. It is what they reasonably expect, all the more so when insecurity and conflict are rising again.

So, my message today: annex 2 and any other States represented here who have not yet ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, please revisit it now. Those States that have not signed the Treaty, please revisit it now. Possessor States, recommit to your moratorium against testing. The Conference on Disarmament launched the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Why not recapture that boldness and now bring the Treaty into force? Thank you.

The President: I thank Dr. Robert Floyd for his statement. Excellencies, distinguished delegates, this concludes our business for this morning. The next meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will take place this afternoon at 2.30 p.m. in this room, room XVIII, with the opening remarks by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.