

**Statement by Vladimir Ermakov,
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of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation,
at the General Debate in the First Committee
of the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly
(6 October 2021)**

Mr. Chair,

I would like to congratulate you upon the election to such a high position. I wish you success with this task. I assure you of the willingness of the Russian delegation to facilitate your efforts in organizing debates in the First Committee of the UN GA.

The exceptional circumstances caused by the coronavirus pandemic have had a very serious effect on the work of the UN GA First Committee (1C) that cannot hold its traditional in-person sessions for two years in a row. We consider the restrictions to be purely temporary. We are grateful to you, Mr. Chair, and to the Secretariat for the assistance in maximizing the presence of delegations in the meeting room.

Effective cooperation of States on highly sensitive issues related to international security can only be carried out in a systematic manner, with substantive discussions on all its aspects with participation of representatives from capitals.

It is all the more important to resume full operation of the 1C in the light of the exacerbation of current global and regional security challenges and the emergence of new ones, as well as the growing destructive tendencies aimed at dismantling the existing international arms control regimes. We see the need for joint action to remedy this situation, primarily through the faithful observance

of the norms and principles of international law by all States, with the UN continuing to play its central role.

The Russian Federation is fully aware of its responsibility for the maintenance of global and regional stability and pursues the policy to preserve peace. We propose concrete political and diplomatic measures aimed at preventing the deterioration of the international security situation, as well as protecting and strengthening the arms control architecture.

We welcome the sober pragmatism shown by the new U.S. administration. Russia and the U.S. have managed to jointly reach some important and constructive decisions. The New START Treaty has been extended for five years, what we have been consistently advocating. At the Russian-U.S. summit held in Geneva on 16 June, the parties reaffirmed their commitment to the principle of inadmissibility of nuclear war, which is something we have urged for some time.

The agreement between presidents of Russia and the U.S. has initiated an integrated dialogue on strategic stability. Its key objective is to lay the groundwork for future arms control. We on our side suggest to develop a new “security equation” that would comprise key strategic stability factors and cover all offensive and embrace nuclear and non-nuclear weapons capable of performing strategic tasks. We look forward to work in a constructive manner in the search for common ground with a view to converging our positions on the basis of mutual consideration of each other’s interests. The spirit of the meetings we have had so far gives reason for cautious optimism.

However, problematic issues remain, mainly caused by the destructive actions performed by Washington attempting to obtain unilateral advantages in the so-declared “great powers competition”. The collapse of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty due to the U.S. withdrawal from it with NATO support has made the threat of the deploying U.S.-made land-based intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles in Europe and the Asia-Pacific

real. Since Russia declared a moratorium on the first deployment of land-based intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles, the NATO members were called upon to make similar commitments and to work on allaying existing concerns in a cooperative manner on a reciprocal basis. We also proposed specific schemes to elaborate verification procedures. We called on all parties concerned to seek a solution to the issue of maintaining stability and preventing missile crises in the Asia-Pacific region. Our proposals remain on the table.

The development by the U.S. of its global missile defense system and its deployment in various regions of the world combined with the building of the capacity of high-precision non-nuclear weapons capable of performing strategic tasks remain a negative factor entailing considerable risks to global security. The U.S. non-strategic nuclear weapons is deployed on the territory of non-nuclear European States that is a violation of NPT commitments, its modernization, including the means of delivery, is ongoing. NATO continues its practice of “nuclear sharing” involving non-nuclear Alliance members in circumvention of the Treaty.

We cannot fail to mention the U.S. withdrawal from the Open Skies Treaty. It has broken the balance of the rights, obligations and interests of its parties and inflicted serious damage on international security. We were forced to mirror that move by denouncing the Treaty.

Nuclear disarmament has high priority on the international agenda. We share the commitment to the noble goal of achieving a nuclear-free world. The question that needs to be answered is how to make progress toward this goal without undermining global stability and deepening the divide among States. We firmly believe that real progress towards nuclear disarmament can be achieved only through consensus-based decisions, by taking calibrated step-by-step measures, and keeping with the principle of equal and indivisible security as well as the need to maintain strategic balance.

Russia has taken meaningful steps in that direction, reducing the role and place of nuclear weapons in its doctrines. The time has come to reflect seriously on how to bring nuclear disarmament to the multilateral level. In our view, all States with military nuclear capabilities should be involved in the dialogue.

As a sponsor and depositary of the NPT, we view this Treaty as a fundamental element of the international security system. We are looking forward to the Tenth NPT Review Conference to be held in early 2022. It is our hope that the Conference will serve to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime and bridge the existing differences.

Russia is of the view that any challenges to the non-proliferation regime should be addressed through peaceful means and on the basis of the NPT. A striking example is the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on the Iranian nuclear issue. The US withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018 seriously undermined this agreement. It will not be easy to restore it. We call on all participants to show political wisdom in order to revive the JCPOA.

The establishment of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZs) in various regions of the world is an important element of maintaining the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Our country has ratified all signed protocols to the NWFZ Treaties, granting security guarantees to more than 100 NPT States parties. We support the earliest possible establishment of a zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East, as envisaged in the 1995 Review and Extension Conference resolution.

We support the IAEA's efforts to verify the fulfilment of the NPT States parties' non-proliferation obligations. This Agency is the only international mechanism authorized to carry out such activities. We support a stronger IAEA safeguards system that maintains its impartiality and welcome the universalization of the Additional Protocol to the IAEA Safeguards Agreement, on the understanding that accession to the Protocol is a voluntary measure.

We are examining possible consequences of the establishment of the AUKUS trilateral security partnership. It is already clear that this partnership will not contribute to strengthening the NPT. There is a potential risk that another non-nuclear-weapon State will be used to deploy nuclear-weapon States' military nuclear infrastructure. This leads to greater international instability and runs counter to the efforts to reduce nuclear weapon arsenals.

While not directly prohibited by the Treaty, the construction of nuclear submarines by a non-nuclear-weapon State party to the NPT could set a very negative precedent for the implementation of IAEA safeguards.

This partnership is also questionable in the context of Australia's participation in the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (the Treaty of Rarotonga). Clarifying reservations made by nuclear-weapon States when signing or ratifying protocols to nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties seem to be justified.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the CTBT's opening for signature. However, the Treaty has never entered into force. We call on the remaining eight Annex 2 States, which hold the fate of the Treaty in their hands, to take urgent steps to ratify it.

Mr Chair,

Russia fully supports the international regime prohibiting chemical, biological and toxin weapons and consistently advocates its universalization and strengthening. Our initiatives are well known. We will continue to promote them in the relevant multilateral fora.

We make efforts to strengthen the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC), primarily by resuming work on a legally binding protocol to the BWC with effective verification mechanism. Russian initiatives to establish mobile biomedical units and a Scientific Advisory Committee, to update confidence-building measures, and to establish a BWC mechanism for investigating alleged violations of the Convention would be instrumental in

strengthening the institutional framework of the BWC. An open-ended working group would help to accomplish these tasks and other constructive suggestions from States. We propose that appropriate decisions be taken at the Ninth BWC Review Conference.

Another issue that needs to be considered is updating the principles and procedures of the UN Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons, which have not been revised since their approval in 1990. With this view we are submitting a relevant draft resolution. We are counting on broad support and co-sponsorship.

The situation in the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) continues to deteriorate. Several countries, in contradiction to the principle of consensus, have resorted to voting in order to put pressure in favour of decisions that benefit them and contradict the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention. This has led to a division in the OPCW, the loss of its independent status and credibility as a renowned institution in the field of chemical disarmament and non-proliferation.

Mr. Chair,

This year, humankind is celebrating a historic date – the 60th anniversary of the first manned flight into outer space. On 12 April 1961, Yuri Gagarin, a citizen of our country, orbited the Earth in a spacecraft and started the era of manned space exploration in the history of our civilization.

Cooperation in the exploration and peaceful use of outer space should stay among the priorities of the global community. It is important to make sure that the limitless possibilities of the use of outer space are pursued in a way that is beneficial, not detrimental, to all humankind.

However, the risks of outer space becoming an arena of conflict are materializing. Several UN Member States are pursuing the course towards the placement of weapons in outer space, increasing the capacities for the use of force (both kinetic and non-kinetic) against outer space objects, and the use of

outer space for combat operations to achieve military superiority. We believe that regardless of the disagreements between separate States, it is in the common interests of the international community not to allow the outer space to turn into an arena for combat operations.

The efforts of the global community, primarily space-faring nations, to prevent an arms race in outer space are now more important than ever, as they would guarantee saving outer space for peaceful purposes for the benefit of humanity. We call on our colleagues to strictly abide by decisions adopted by the first Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament in 1978, aimed at conducting research and using outer space exclusively for peaceful purposes, preventing an arms race in outer space (PAROS), and launching relevant negotiations in line with 1967 Outer Space Treaty.

Russia has always advocated for the elaboration of an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. To this end, in 2008, Russia and China submitted to the Conference on Disarmament (CD) a draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects (PPWT), in 2014 we submitted its updated version. The document remains on the table for negotiations in the CD. The PPWT could become a sound foundation for a future multilateral instrument.

Our initiative/political obligation on no first placement of weapons in outer space that has already acquired an international character, is aimed at stabilizing the situation until an instrument of this kind is being elaborated. Thirty countries have already become its full-fledged participants. We encourage others to join this initiative.

We submit for consideration of the First Committee draft resolutions “No first placement of weapons in outer space” and “Transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities” as well as “Further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space”. We expect

maximum support and co-sponsorship.

One of our country's key priorities in the United Nations is the consistent continuation of an inclusive multilateral discussion on international information security (IIS). We believe that it is important to reinforce the current atmosphere of consensus and a focus on results in the discussion on the topic within the UN. To this end, we intend to submit for consideration of the 76th session of the General Assembly the joint draft of the traditional Russian resolution on IIS.

Our document will allow to bring an end to the functioning of two parallel negotiating tracks and ensure constructive activities of the new 2021-2025 UN Open-Ended Working Group on security of and in the use of ICTs established on Russian initiative and with the support of the overwhelming majority of UN Member States.

We call on all UN Member States to support our initiative and become its co-sponsors.

Mr. Chair,

There is a growing need to consolidate the international community on the basis of a creative and constructive agenda, as well as to normalize the work of the UN disarmament machinery. To this end, Russia will continue to strive to improve the effectiveness and coherence of activities of the IC, CD, and United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC). Collaborative work of these platforms would facilitate the resumption of a substantial dialogue on pressing issues on the international disarmament agenda without the imposition of politicized national approaches.

Our initiative to elaborate within the CD an international convention for the suppression of acts of chemical and biological terrorism aims to promote the principles of unification and consolidation, in line with the current demands of the global community. We believe that its implementation would help to overcome the standstill in the work of the CD on the basis of common interests.

We are also counting on the resumption of work of the UNDC which has

for a long time been blocked for organizational reasons, including due to the non-issuance of visas to leading experts of the Russian delegation. All representatives of UN Member States should continue to enjoy unimpeded and non-discriminatory access to the UN Headquarters.

Mr. Chair,

The Russian Federation encourages UN Members States to collaborate on a whole range of issues linked to international peace and security on an equal basis and refrain from confrontational methods. We propose to unite in the face of our common challenges. We intend to reach mutually acceptable solutions.

Thank you.