

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ALBERT CHIMBINDI ON BEHALF OF THE DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE DURING THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE OF THE 76TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY: OCTOBER 2021

Chairperson,

Zimbabwe joins others in congratulating you, as well as the members of your Bureau, on your election to the helm of this very important Committee. The Bureau can count on our support and cooperation as it discharges its functions.

Zimbabwe aligns itself with the statements delivered by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and that delivered by Ghana on behalf of the Africa Group. In addition, we also wish to make the following remarks in our national capacity.

Chairperson,

My delegation shares the Non-Aligned Movement's frustration with the increasing global military expenditures and the modernization of both the nuclear and conventional arsenals, at a time when we are seeking common ground on modalities for disarmament. The resources being expended as military budgets are direly needed elsewhere, including for post pandemic recovery, development finance, preventing future pandemics, poverty eradication and climate adaptation and mitigation. The continued rise in global military expenditures may have inadvertently triggered an **arms race**, which is partly a cause, effect and consequence of armed conflict.

Zimbabwe believes that the elimination of nuclear weapons is the existential challenge of our times and ought to remain a top priority for the United Nations. Zimbabwe believes that nuclear disarmament is not a question of choice, but an existential imperative that our generation has to pursue, in good faith, to save future generations from possible annihilation.

In this context, we are concerned by the lack of progress on the nuclear disarmament Agenda and fear that the goal of nuclear disarmament and, eventually, the total elimination of nuclear weapons, is receding as the nuclear arms control architecture stalls.

Mr. Chairman,

We are, however, encouraged by the decision by the US and Russia to extend the Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START Treaty). We hope that the spirit of dialogue and compromise, that culminated with the joint decision, will persist and be carried into the NPT Review Conference and the next sessions of the UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC) and the Conference of Disarmament (CD).

Chairperson,

Zimbabwe joins other delegations in appreciating the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and hopes that it will achieve universal jurisdiction, in due course. Zimbabwe signed this important Treaty in December 2020 and consultations, as well as administrative processes for ratification, are ongoing.

Excellencies,

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of our collective efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology and to achieving nuclear disarmament. We look forward to the re-scheduled and full-fledged 10th REVCON in January 2022. The need for a successful REVCON, underpinned by a consensual, balanced and comprehensive outcome document is now more urgent than ever.

Mr. Chairman,

Zimbabwe wishes to underscore that the pursuit of non-proliferation should not undermine the inalienable **right of States to use nuclear technology and applications for peaceful purposes, one** of the three pillars of the NPT. That right should be preserved. We emphasise, nonetheless, that the right to peaceful and developmental uses of nuclear energy and applications should be enjoyed responsibly, with adequate safeguards, to prevent nuclear material and technology from falling into the wrong hands. We reiterate our firm belief that nuclear safety and security should never be used as a pretext to curtail the right of developing countries to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Mr. Chairman,

Zimbabwe is convinced that **Nuclear Weapon-Free ones (NWFZs) are important building blocks** for nuclear disarmament and for the non-proliferation regime. In this regard, Zimbabwe remains committed to its obligations under the Africa Nuclear Weapons Free Zone Treaty, the Pelindaba Treaty. We reiterate our desire to preserve the African continent as

a nuclear weapons free zone and to contribute towards preventing the installation or testing of nuclear devices on the continent, including its air space.

Zimbabwe is concerned by the growing potency of the threats emanating from the **abuse of Information Communication Technology (ICT)** tools and applications. In this regard, Zimbabwe welcomes, and supports the creation of a new Open- Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Developments in ICT in the context of International Security 2020-2025. Zimbabwe reaffirms its support for the special role of the OEWG as a democratic, inclusive and consensus-based institution which provides a platform for multilateral dialogue and debate on ICT issues and how they impact on international security. It gives all Member States, large and small, an equal voice on matters of collective security in the realm of ICT and international security. Going forward, we should remain resolute in our efforts to safeguard cyberspace from becoming an arena of conflict and ensure, instead, that it is exclusively for peaceful uses and for the good of mankind.

Regarding Outer Space, Zimbabwe is concerned by the increasing propensity by some States to **place weapons in space and to turn it into a war fighting domain**. Outer space is a common asset for all humanity for which every country on Earth has a stake and vested interest. Since it is extremely fragile and volatile, we advocate for the **establishment of a rules-based order to securely govern that sphere**. We therefore, concur with suggestions consistently made by some delegations on the need for a legally binding instrument to prevent an arms race in outer space and to fill legal gaps.

In conclusion, Zimbabwe calls upon all of us to **remain guided by the principles and purposes of the UN Charter**, particularly the principles of sovereignty, sovereign equality of States, non-interference, refraining from the threat or use of force in international relations, pacific settlement of disputes and peaceful coexistence among States. It is our view that the **multilateral framework of the UN remains the most effective platform** for dealing with issues of disarmament and international security.

I thank you.