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Statement by

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Thank you, Mr. Chair,

Let me express my delegation's sincere congratulations to you on your election as the Chair of the First Committee and wish you and the members of the Bureau every success.

Czechia is fully aligned with the statement delivered by the European Union. I would like to add the following remarks in the national capacity, reflecting on developments of the past year as we see them.

First, it is deplorable that the Russian unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine continues. Russia frequently attempts to prevent Member States from addressing its invasion in Ukraine in various disarmament fora, claiming that it has nothing to do with arms control, disarmament or non-proliferation. This, of course, is false. The aggression is in itself a flagrant breach of the UN Charter and a threat to international peace and security, in this case perpetrated by a nuclear weapon state and a permanent member of the Security Council.

Moreover, it is accompanied by Russia's irresponsible nuclear rhetoric, policy of coercion, intimidation and blackmailing. This undermines the balance and integrity of the whole non-proliferation and disarmament system which has proved to work in practice for many decades. The decision to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of Belarus goes even beyond threatening rhetorics and leads to further escalation.

Further, for the first time in history, a nuclear power plant is held by occupation forces of an aggressor State, with all the ensuing risks. The safety and security situation in and around Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) remains volatile. Despite the highly valued endeavours of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and its Director General, Russia's actions continue to compromise each of the "seven indispensable pillars of nuclear safety and security" defined by the Director General. Moreover, they also contravene his "five principles for averting a catastrophic incident" at the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant. Russia should remove all its weapons, military equipment and personnel from the Zaporizhzhya NPP, and immediately stop its illegal occupation. In this vein, Czechia objects in the strongest terms to the earlier statements that ZNPP belongs to Russia. This is a clear infringement on international law and principles and we urge the

Russian Federation to immediately return the ZNPP under the full control of the competent Ukrainian authorities.

Chair,

Czechia considers the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to be the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. All three pillars are equally important, therefore should be well balanced. We call on all NPT P5 members to act as responsible Nuclear Weapon States, also in terms of transparency regarding their nuclear arsenals. In this respect, we specifically call on China to share basic facts and figures about its nuclear weapons program, in line with the NPT obligations and following practice of the other Nuclear Weapon States.

With regard to nuclear proliferation, we witness an unprecedented crisis around the DPRK, multiplied by the inability of the UN Security Council (UNSC) to react accordingly, as the veto right is being misused to block the Council's action. Attendance of high-ranking officials of two UNSC Permanent Members at the North Korean military parade featuring ballistic missiles shows negligence vis-à-vis valid UNSC resolutions and related sanctions regime.

Very serious proliferation issues remain also open in relation to the Iranian nuclear program, as too many of its parameters are going out of bounds of peaceful uses justification. We call on Iran to clarify all outstanding safeguards issues and honour its legal obligations and commitments.

As to the peaceful uses in general, Czechia supports their promotion politically, in-kind as well as financially, e.g. through the IAEA Technical Cooperation Fund and voluntary contributions to the IAEA Peaceful Uses Initiative.

However, we have to reject the politically motivated misuse of the whole concept of peaceful uses, attempting to discredit legitimate export controls at both international and national levels. Export controls are, in fact, an important guarantee that traded goods, materials and technologies are used for exclusively peaceful purposes. Therefore, they remain an obligation of every responsible State.

Chair,

The international community should now focus with all vigour on important unfinished business in the nuclear field, be it the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) not yet in force, the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) long overdue, and the same for the Middle East Zone without Nuclear Weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction.

With regard to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, or the TPNW, evoked by many, we continue to believe that the NPT can and must be the vehicle for comprehensive nuclear disarmament. While we understand the frustration of many delegations, in our view, the slow progress in this direction is driven by the overall precarious security environment which I touched upon in my statement, and corresponding lack of political will. Those factors will not be remedied by creation and adherence to alternative international instruments.

These traditional non-proliferation challenges are nowadays coupled by new ones, specifically in the area of emerging and disruptive technologies and artificial intelligence. Notwithstanding the deadlock in the Conference of Disarmament, we are convinced that flexible international instruments can constitute a viable way ahead. At the outset, they need not necessarily be legally binding. But if widely respected and implemented, they bring about more value and effect than unfulfilled treaty obligations. To this end, Czechia endorses the newly issued Political Declaration on Responsible Military Use of Artificial Intelligence and Autonomy.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.