Resolution 72/28 was adopted without a vote. The United States firmly believes that science and technology present both opportunities and challenges in the context of international security and disarmament. Therefore, reviewing developments in science and technology (S&T) is important to understanding such possible future opportunities and challenges. In that context, we welcome discussions related to scientific and technological developments, including technology of relevance to international security and disarmament, and to peaceful uses, that appropriately and fruitfully are being conducted in existing fora. Many of these venues have open mandates to address various aspects of such issues and, as such, are best suited to review and assess the possible implications of those developments. Resolution 72/28 rightfully acknowledges related mandates and work underway in such fora, including the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, as well as related discussions in the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, and under the framework of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects.

Resolution 72/28 also refers to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC), Article XII of which provides that its Review Conferences “take into account any new scientific and technological developments relevant to the Convention.” In that context, the United States welcomes the decision at the 2018 Meeting of BWC States Parties to conduct annually Meetings of Experts on five issues in 2018, 2019, and 2020, including one on “Review of developments in the field of science and technology related to the Convention.” We look forward to all the Meetings of Experts this coming August. We hope that the S&T experts, in addition to the standing agenda item on genome editing, will assess the evolving nature of risks and benefits associated with S&T advances, and focus also on responsible conduct of research in the life sciences, including codes of conduct. In fact, a number of BWC States Parties supported creation of a BWC Science and Technology review mechanism, including the United States (BWC/CONF.VIII/PC/WP.3).
Although we are sympathetic to the desire to understand future technology trends in the context of international security, we support the current practice of addressing focused S&T issues in existing bodies is appropriate given the broad range of potential developments and the broad range of different contexts in which these developments might affect international security and disarmament. For example, we do not believe a United Nations high-level panel of experts tasked to assess current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts could achieve a useful outcome. Among other concerns, a small panel of experts drawn from a diverse set of fields, convened for meetings over a limited period of time, would have difficulty in developing informed assessments across a broad spectrum that could make new contributions to the UN General Assembly’s deliberations.