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Chairman: Mr. TAYLHARDAT (Venezuela)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

AGENDA ITEMS 49 TO 69 AND 151 (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT ITEMS

Mr. STEPHANOU (Greece) (interpretation from French): Allow me, first of all, Sir, on behalf of my country and on my own behalf, to congratulate you cordially on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. Your long diplomatic experience and your skill in dealing with problems of disarmament, which you have manifested repeatedly, are the best pledge of the success of our work. Our congratulations also go to the two Vice-Chairmen, Mohamed Nabil Fahmy and Hassan Mashhadi and to our Rapporteur - my compatriot, Dimitrios Platis.

I would also like to take this opportunity to convey our condolences to the Government of the United States with regard to the terrible earthquake which struck northern California. Our condolences go to the victims and we also extend our best wishes for the prompt rehabilitation of the survivors, and for California's recovery from the damage suffered.

It is also my pleasant privilege to express, on behalf of my delegation, our complete satisfaction with the masterly and inspired manner in which Ambassador Douglas Roche of Canada conducted the work of the Committee at the forty-third session. We also wish to commend Mr. Akashi, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, and the Committee's Secretary, Mr. Kheradi, for their work.

On 16 October 1989, Ambassador Pierre Morel, speaking in his capacity as Chairman, on behalf of the twelve States members of the European Community, gave a detailed account of the Community's views on disarmament. While fully endorsing the remarks made by Mr. Morel, I wish to put forward certain additional views of the Greek Government on certain points.

(Mr. Stephanou, Greece)

Greece - a country traditionally and firmly dedicated to peace and to the procedures for the peaceful settlement of disputes - can only endorse any initiative or effort aimed at accelerating the disarmament process. Proceeding from the principle that war must no longer be an instrument of politics and that it is the duty of the international community to prevent all wars, whether nuclear or conventional, Greece is opposed to any act of commission or omission that would impede the disarmament process. Such impediments would result in an increase in reasons for the use or threat of use of force or in the reasons for military intervention, occupation of territories by foreign armies or faits accomplis. They are violations of the principles of the United Nations Charter and are inconsistent with the United Nations goal of safeguarding the peace.

(Mr. Stephanou, Greece)

The efforts towards nuclear and conventional disarmament remain our central concern. These efforts which have long been under way within the United Nations system, have been much influenced recently by the progress in the bilateral negotiations between the super-Powers. Also, our hopes have been bolstered by the joint declaration of 23 September last, at Jackson Lake Lodge, to the effect that the United States and the Soviet Union reaffirmed their common will to continue their efforts to achieve a universal, effectively verifiable and truly general ban on chemical weapons and the destruction of all chemical weapon stockpiles.

As at the 43rd session, the work of the First Committee has this year begun auspiciously. After concluding their Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles - INF Treaty - of December 1987, the United States and the Soviet Union have continued their dialogue, including in the area of arms control. The two super-Powers have reaffirmed their undertaking to halve their strategic arsenals. We attach great importance also to action in the field of preventing an arms race in space and ending nuclear tests.

Greece, which is convinced of the central role of the United Nations in promoting disarmament, fully accepts the need for multilateralism if the international climate is to be improved. As our Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. George Papoulias, has emphasized with reference to the joint efforts which have set us on the path to tangible progress in relations between East and West in Europe, we are convinced that confidence can replace mistrust and that co-operation should take the place of confrontation.

The positive results of the Stockholm Conference as regards the strengthening of confidence between the European States and the welcome outcome of the discussions in Vienna at the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) are encouraging signs for security and co-operation in Europe.

(Mr. Stephanou, Greece)

In this respect, my country welcomes the opening of two sets of negotiations: one on developing new security and confidence-building measures, and the other on conventional armed forces in Europe.

Greece, with its firm commitment to developing confidence at the regional level, is gratified to have been the first to propose implementing the Helsinki Final Act on a regional basis. As part of the process begun by the CSCE, co-operation in the Balkan peninsula has proved to be one of the most significant developments. We are firmly committed to promoting such co-operation with our Balkan neighbours in areas of common interest. As our Minister of Foreign Affairs has emphasized, "We shall spare no effort towards the furtherance of this process, which serves peace and stability in our region". (A/44/PV.11, pp. 44-45)

My country, which is party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, remains faithful to its principles and provisions. In this respect, we hope that the Fourth NPT Review Conference will help consolidate and strengthen the non-proliferation régime and that more countries will accede to the Treaty.

As it opposes the horizontal and vertical proliferation of nuclear arms, Greece is pleased that the United States and the Soviet Union are continuing their START negotiations to reach agreement on limiting such weapons, and that they have agreed to establish nuclear risk reduction centres pursuant to their implementation of article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Any progress towards curbing and reversing the nuclear arms race will help strengthen the non-proliferation régime.

Disarmament is a multidimensional process, and the danger of a nuclear war is only one side of the coin. Destruction in terms of human lives has its origins essentially in conventional weapons, whose destructive power continues to increase. Greece therefore supports any effort aimed at reducing conventional

(Mr. Stephanou, Greece)

weapons to the lowest possible level which takes account of the security interests of each State and the military threats resulting from the existing imbalances. Greece shares the conviction that progress in the field of conventional disarmament is indispensable and contributes to reducing the risk of a nuclear conflict, with the aim of achieving prevention of war at any level of hostility. Thus, the development begun in Europe in the sphere of conventional arms control and in security and confidence measures is a major contribution and establishes a positive precedent in the general disarmament process.

Concluding a global, universal and verifiable convention on the prohibition of the development, production and stockpiling of chemical weapons and on their destruction is for Greece a priority issue on a par with nuclear and conventional disarmament.

Greece welcomes the results of the Paris Conference of 7 to 9 January 1989, which gave fresh impetus to efforts speedily to eliminate chemical weapons. This new political boost to the Geneva negotiations and the memorandum on the subject concluded between the United States and the Soviet Union are encouraging examples of the movement towards ending the risk of the proliferation of these weapons.

In this respect, my country also welcomes the Canberra Conference, held from 18 to 22 September 1989, between representatives of Government and industry on chemical weapons. The resolution that Conference adopted unanimously is a new, positive contribution to the Geneva negotiations and implementation of a convention once it is signed.

Because of its awareness of the problems of development, Greece is ready to support any effort aimed at implementing the programme of action adopted by the Conference on disarmament and development in such a way that their relationship is manifested in practical terms.

(Mr. Stephanou, Greece)

My delegation is convinced that the United Nations must play a central role in the field of disarmament, in accordance with the aims and objectives set out in its Charter. Greece is therefore prepared to support the initiatives to promote and strengthen the performance and output of the First Committee, and would take this opportunity to praise the persevering efforts of successive Chairmen who have guided the work of our Committee in recent years, which have proved positive. These efforts have, inter alia, facilitated the adoption of a larger number of resolutions by consensus, and this, combined with the improved general climate, should give the work of our Committee fresh impetus.

(Mr. Stephanou, Greece)

I have confined myself to listing a certain number of items. Let us hope that the sense of responsibility which our Governments must show, and which has led to the current long-awaited improvement of the international climate, will find in our work the necessary inspiration and will to achieve the goals we have set ourselves, covering the vast range of disarmament problems that we have to deal with.

Mr. TANASIE (Romania) (interpretation from French): It is a particular pleasure, Sir, for me to be able to begin by warmly congratulating you on your election as Chairman of our Committee. You are the distinguished representative of a country which, although geographically distant from us, is close to us by reason of our common Latin origin and culture. We are convinced that your ability and personal qualities guarantee a successful outcome to the Committee's work. I wish also to congratulate the other officers of the Committee as well as the members of the Secretariat who are working with us.

I should like to associate myself with the other speakers who have expressed to the delegations of the United States and the People's Republic of China sympathy and condolences with regard to the recent earthquakes, which claimed so many victims.

The debates in our Committee, like those taking place in the General Assembly during the current session, are occurring at a time of great significance in the evolution of international relations. Over recent years a number of significant steps have been taken on the path to disarmament. They include the Soviet-United States agreement on the elimination of medium-range missiles and the fact that a number of international conflicts are proceeding towards political solutions, through negotiation.

(Mr. Tanasie, Romania)

However, it must be noted that, as a number of delegations have stressed in the general debate, the international situation is still fragile and détente has not become irreversible. The international community is still confronted with complex and worrying phenomena. There are in the world immense quantities of nuclear and conventional weapons, and nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction are being modernized and are becoming increasingly sophisticated. We are also witnessing extremely high military budgets and the beginnings of the militarization of outer space.

The destructive capacity of nuclear weapons has hardly been affected by the Soviet-United States agreement, and that capacity will even be increased by the proposed modernization of tactical nuclear weapons. Furthermore, there are significant stocks of chemical weapons, and they will be increased with the production of binary weapons. Chemical and nuclear weapons form integral parts of the planned armaments of certain countries and of their tactics. Those factors, combined with the continued existence of the doctrine of nuclear deterrence, keep the arms race going and perpetuate the danger of war.

We should consider this bleak picture in conjunction with the heavy burden of underdevelopment, which is in itself a great threat to international peace and stability. It is not by chance that in raising disarmament problems at the current session the developing countries have again emphatically linked them with the vital need to eliminate underdevelopment, so that the resources now being wasted for military purposes may be reassigned for economic and social development.

All of this makes it clear that the basic problem of the modern world is still to halt the arms race and achieve disarmament, starting with nuclear disarmament, with the final elimination by stages of all nuclear weapons, a halt to nuclear tests and to the militarization of outer space, and a radical reduction of conventional weapons.

(Mr. Tanasie, Romania)

The achievement of those goals requires fostering new thinking and a new approach to the solution of international problems, including disarmament problems. As is borne out by the present international situation, that effort should be based on firm respect for the principles of relations between States - above all, equality of rights, national independence and sovereignty, non-interference in the internal affairs of others, the non-use of force or the threat of its use, and mutual advantage.

Like many others, our delegation thinks that the priority disarmament objective undoubtedly continues to be nuclear disarmament. It is clear that nuclear weapons do not provide genuine security, and that their steady accumulation would lead to increased insecurity. This priority should be reflected in the debates and negotiations within the United Nations and elsewhere.

The action most urgently needed now to reverse the arms race is a halt to the development of nuclear weapons. In the present more favourable political conditions, factors causing political-military imbalances should be eliminated solely through negotiation, not by the use of more sophisticated technology, leading to the development of new and even more lethal weapons.

Experts believe that the proposed modernization of short-range nuclear missiles would by itself mean a fourfold increase in their destructive capacity, which would more than outweigh the effect of the reduction of medium-range missiles. That is why Romania has repeatedly reaffirmed its opposition to the modernization of short-range missiles, calling rather for the start of negotiations to bring about their total elimination from the arsenals of States.

The Romanian delegation believes that the General Assembly should appeal to all States to renounce the modernization and development of nuclear weapons and also to renounce the doctrine of nuclear deterrence. That is the only way to guarantee the effectiveness of any disarmament measures which may be adopted.

(Mr. Tanasie, Romania)

Similarly, a halt to all nuclear tests is also urgently needed. Romania attaches special importance to the Six-Nation Initiative, and actively supports the convening of an international conference to amend the 1963 Treaty Banning Nuclear Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and under Water, in order to include in it the cessation of underground nuclear tests.

The Romanian delegation has already spoken in the General Assembly of the importance of stepping up negotiations between the Soviet Union and the United States on strategic weapons. My delegation believes that it would be useful to renew the General Assembly's appeal to the Soviet Union and the United States to conclude as soon as possible a treaty to reduce their strategic nuclear weapons by 50 per cent. Romania will actively support any resolution containing such an appeal.

(Mr. Tanasie, Romania)

At the same time, there is a vital need, within the framework of the Geneva Conference on Disarmament, to move urgently towards the development of a comprehensive treaty for the prohibition and gradual total elimination of nuclear weapons, one that would include a ban on the production and testing of nuclear weapons as well as provide for the destruction of stockpiles and methods of transport.

Clearly, the Geneva Conference on Disarmament has an important role to play in the process of nuclear disarmament, and it must step up negotiations on all the items on its agenda and achieve more effective results.

Unfortunately, at this year's session the Conference on Disarmament failed to arrive at a joint approach that would enable it to move on to substantive negotiations on nuclear-disarmament items. It is also regrettable to note that the problem of the nuclear test-ban was not considered in depth owing to the inability to establish an ad hoc committee of the Conference on that item.

With respect to negotiations on the draft convention on the prohibition and elimination of chemical weapons, although certain paragraphs of a procedural and drafting nature were completed this year, important substantive issues remain to be resolved, such as the modalities for monitoring and verification, the procedure for destroying chemical-weapon stockpiles and production facilities, a guarantee of the security of States during the transition period until implementation of the convention and the need to guarantee the peaceful use of the chemical industry.

It is incumbent upon us to increase our efforts in the Conference on Disarmament to find solutions to those problems and to complete the drafting of the convention.

Along with other delegations we feel that in view of the existing interdependence between chemical and nuclear weapons the countries participating in the work of the Conference on Disarmament should more energetically engage in

(Mr. Tanasie, Romania)

negotiations to ban the production and stockpiling of chemical weapons along with negotiations on the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We must bear in mind that an effective and equitable process of nuclear and chemical disarmament should be based on the principle of equal security for all countries and devised so as not to create new imbalances in international life.

The Conference on Disarmament should also step up its efforts to achieve practical results in its work to prevent the militarization of outer space. At this year's session discussions on that subject were still general in nature. The ultimate goal should be the prohibition of all military activities in outer space and prevention of the misuse of that region. The time has come to respond to the call of the international community to ensure that outer space is proclaimed the common heritage of mankind and used exclusively for peaceful purposes. It is quite clear that any unilateral action to militarize outer space will inevitably be followed by a similar action on the other side.

Linked to the problem of nuclear disarmament is the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones. This represents an important step in consolidating peace and in creating conditions for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Romania has always worked to bring about the transformation of the Balkans into a zone of peace, co-operation and good-neighbourliness free from nuclear and chemical weapons and without foreign bases or troops. At the same time, it supports the creation of such zones in other parts of the world.

At the Third Review Conference on the Treaty on the Prohibition of the Emplacement of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction on the Sea-Bed and the Ocean Floor and in the Subsoil Thereof, several delegations, including that of Romania, called for the negotiated reduction of naval armaments and military forces in the light of the existing situation. My delegation feels that more must

(Mr. Tanasie, Romania)

be done to achieve the total demilitarization of the sea-bed and the ocean floor and that negotiations must be begun to reduce naval forces to the levels strictly necessary for defence, that the creation of denuclearized zones in various maritime regions should also be encouraged and stimulated and that steps should be taken to prevent the further dumping of toxic or radioactive wastes on the ocean floor and sea-beds.

On our view, naval forces should be included in the disarmament process, and the United Nations, as well as the Geneva Conference on Disarmament, should step up its activities in this field.

While giving priority attention to the problems of nuclear disarmament, Romania at the same time supports the taking of practical steps to reduce conventional armaments, troops and military spending.

My country welcomes the Vienna negotiations on the reduction of conventional armaments and on confidence- and security-building measures in Europe. Indeed, we are actively participating in them, inspired by a desire to contribute, with other participating countries, to the achievement of disarmament and to the establishment of a new system of international relations that would exclude the use or threat of use of force. Romania hopes that the negotiations will soon lead to positive results, namely, a radical reduction in armaments and military forces in Europe, of at least 50 per cent to begin with, preserving a military balance that would exclude any possibility of military aggression and under strict international control.

For its part, three years ago, in 1986, Romania carried out a unilateral 5 to 10 per cent reduction in its armaments, armed forces and military spending, and the resources thus freed were redirected to various programmes of economic and social development - the construction of housing, assistance to large families, and so on. At present military expenditure in Romania does not exceed 3 per cent of

(Mr. Tanasie, Romania)

national income, an amount that is among the lowest in the world on a per capita basis. Our expenditure will continue to be held at that level. In view of the fact that military expenditure represents the primary factor fuelling the arms race, Romania is in favour of an over-all reduction in the military budgets of States, not only in Europe but throughout the world, beginning with a first cut of at least 50 per cent, making it possible to use the resources thus freed for the economic and social development of countries and to increase assistance to developing countries. That would be consistent with the provisions of the Final Document of the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development.

The Romanian delegation, like many other delegations, has in recent years paid particular attention within the United Nations to the reduction of military budgets, a question that has also been included this year on the First Committee's agenda. We are grateful to the delegations that have supported our view that the adoption of principles governing activities of States in negotiations to freeze and reduce military budgets would be a significant contribution by the United Nations to the future orientation of States in their negotiations to reduce military budgets and to bring about a world of peace and co-operation. We hope that the spirit of co-operation that characterizes the work of the General Assembly and of this Committee will make it possible to conclude the drafting of a document of principles at this session.

(Mr. Tanasie, Romania)

Romania welcomed the General Assembly's declaration of the 1990s as the Third Disarmament Decade. Bearing in mind, on the one hand, the more favourable international political climate, and on the other, the dangers that continue, at the end of the twentieth century, to threaten the very existence of mankind and civilization on our planet, the goals of the Third Disarmament Decade should, in our view, be as follows: reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction; a halt to nuclear tests; elimination, or at least substantial reduction, of nuclear arsenals; renunciation of the militarization of outer space; creation of nuclear- and chemical-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world; and substantial reduction in conventional armaments, forces and military expenditure. Our delegation is prepared to make a contribution to the finalization of the Declaration of the Third Disarmament Decade.

We fully support the view expressed by several delegations here that, particularly within the present political context, the United Nations should play its full and appropriate role in the field of disarmament, employing - and enhancing - its multilateral negotiating mechanism. This would be a direct expression of the need for greater democracy in international relations and for active participation by all States in the settlement of the problems facing mankind. Nuclear weapons do not make choices: once used, they would destroy life in all countries. We share the view that, in view of the indivisible nature of international security, participation by all States in disarmament efforts is not merely a right, but a duty. As we have already had occasion to say, the multilateral negotiating process within the United Nations and elsewhere, far from being incompatible with bilateral negotiations, could in fact play a decisive role in the settlement of the complex problems of disarmament, thereby expressing the will and collective wisdom of all States, which are greatly concerned to live in peace and security.

(Mr. Tanasie, Romania)

With respect to the United Nations Disarmament Commission, we support the use of this potentially important body on the basis of the provisions of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly, the first special session devoted to disarmament. Its role in discussing and drafting recommendations on the major problems of disarmament, with the participation by all States, should be stepped up in view of its important place within the institutional disarmament framework of the United Nations.

I have just presented a number of comments, on behalf of the Romanian delegation, on certain items on the agenda of the First Committee. In so doing I have been prompted by the desire to make our contribution and to assure you, Mr. President, of our co-operation in the discharge of the duties entrusted to you at this session.

Mr. ABULHASAN (Kuwait) (interpretation from Arabic): While I will comply with your request, Mr. Chairman, to spare you the burden of congratulations to you and to the members of the Bureau, I would like to assure you that that in no way diminishes my great esteem for you personally, for the State you so ably represent, or for Mr. Akashi, the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs.

More than a year has passed since the convening of the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament; more than a year has elapsed since the leaders of the two super-Powers agreed on a reduction in strategic nuclear arsenals. Despite the slow pace in making any marked progress on the path of general and complete disarmament, the general atmosphere and the overall assessment of the positions taken by the super-Powers continue to inspire great hope for the attainment of the goals to which all peace-loving peoples aspire: the achievement of disarmament and the use of peaceful means for settling disputes between States.

(Mr. Abulhasan, Kuwait)

The particular importance of our Committee derives from the fact that it devotes its energy and efforts to creating a world free from nuclear weapons, violence and destruction and strives to develop constructive dialogue among all nations on Earth, capitalizing on the spirit of the new political thinking that spreads optimism and promotes more and more of the required flexibility every day. Hence, my country attaches great importance to the work of the First Committee out of its conviction that disarmament and the strengthening of international security constitute an urgent and historical task that requires the maximum concertation of efforts among States, peoples and organizations, their conscious and effective participation in that endeavour and the exerting of every possible effort to encourage all negotiations taking place in this field as well as the consolidation of the positive trends prevailing in the world so that they may become irreversible.

Guided by that conviction, my Government announced a few days ago its decision to ratify the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a contribution to the cause of disarmament world-wide and as an expression of its interest in the consolidation of international peace and security and in sparing humanity the risk of nuclear annihilation.

There is no doubt that the 1980s, a decade now drawing to a close, was one of transition from mere slogans to the initial and important steps on the road leading to disarmament. Our world Organization, peace movements and broad sectors of the well-informed public have played an important role in this regard, a role that must be encouraged and enhanced with all energy and with all available potentials so as to achieve the objectives of nuclear disarmament, foremost among which is the cessation and banning of nuclear tests under a binding international treaty. These objectives also include that of giving effective guarantees for the non-use or threat of use of such weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States.

(Mr. Abulhasan, Kuwait)

Among the major objectives given high priority by Kuwait is the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. This goal requires that all States accede to the NPT, subject their nuclear facilities to the inspection and safeguards régime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and renounce the option of manufacturing, stockpiling and developing nuclear weapons. There is no doubt that, in view of its geopolitical nature, the Middle East is one of the most important regions from which the international community must make sure that nuclear weapons are banished.

When broaching this subject, one cannot fail to condemn the Israeli nuclear-armaments drive and its dire consequences for peace and security, not only within the region, but throughout the world. Israel did not confine itself to stockpiling nuclear weapons and refusing to accede to the NPT: it went further, carrying out tests of an intermediate-range missile capable of delivering nuclear warheads. It has already launched one such missile, which landed 400 kilometres north of the Libyan city of Benghazi.

(Mr. Abulhasan, Kuwait)

Kuwait condemns this act, which it considers a violation of an independent sisterly country's sovereignty, and is of the view that, faced with Israel's persistence in defying international laws and resolutions, this Committee and all members of the international community are required to take a firm stand against such irresponsible actions by Israel lest all the diligent international endeavours and the positive trends in the sphere of disarmament and enhancement of international security be wasted.

Furthermore, we cannot do otherwise than condemn the present nuclear collaboration between Israel and South Africa, which we attribute to their analogous natures and their common racist and colonialist objectives. I do not expect that any member of this distinguished Committee would need to be cautioned against the avid designs of those two racist régimes, with their disgraceful record of acts of terrorism, intimidation and technical piracy. However, what we should reiterate here is the appeal to all countries to refrain from extending to them anything that might bolster their nuclear capacities and expand the arsenals of weapons they have used against their victims.

Disarmament is among the major issues of concern to the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, to which my country is honoured to belong. That this is so was clearly reflected in the priority given to this issue in the Final Declaration of the summit Conference of the Movement, which was held last month in the capital of Yugoslavia. In this context, I should like to emphasize the significance of the contents of that Declaration concerning how imperative it is to have all members of the world community participate in the disarmament negotiations and in the endeavours to reduce the risk of armed conflicts, and the various forms of the use of force, so that a lasting and stable peace may come into being.

(Mr. Abulhasan, Kuwait)

On the other hand, we must all actively seek to cut world military expenditures, which are increasing at an alarming rate and reflect a continuous acceleration in the pace of the arms race, contrary to all the goals of our Organization and of disarmament. Long ago, we came to recognize the negative impact of those stupendous expenditures and of the arms race on economic and social development efforts. We therefore call once again for action to attain the goals of the action programme adopted by the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development, to reduce military budgets, particularly those of the industrial countries, and to utilize the resources so released for development and peaceful purposes. This would serve universal human interests and would contribute especially to aid for developing countries.

We should also renew the call for the elimination of all chemical and biological weapons and for the conclusion of a convention on a comprehensive ban on those weapons. We are gratified to see that the super-Powers are increasingly inclined towards achieving that aim, as illustrated in the initiative by the President of the United States and in the immediate reciprocal response to it by the Soviet Union; this was reflected also in the Paris Conference on the issue, which was a major step forward.

There is no doubt that the goal of keeping space free from weapons and away from arms races in all their forms is another major objective in regard to disarmament and the strengthening of international peace and security, and we hope to witness more positive trends in that direction amongst the countries having the necessary capacities in this regard. Our concern about nuclear weapons of mass destruction can in no way diminish the importance of pursuing the radical reduction of conventional weapons and armed forces on the basis of reasonable sufficiency for the purpose of defence.

(Mr. Abulhasan, Kuwait)

Undoubtedly, we are in agreement on the importance of the role of information, of mobilizing public opinion, and of educating the masses about disarmament issues. It is a plausible and widely held notion that the pressures of public opinion hold considerable sway over the process of decision-making in this area. Consequently, efforts by the masses and by those non-governmental organizations active in disarmament provide backing for the aims and objectives of our world Organization and act to serve the aspirations of peace-loving peoples. This is why Kuwait has, in recent years, been contributing to the World Disarmament Campaign sponsored by the United Nations. The United Nations is about to hold a pledging conference for this Campaign, at which Kuwait will make a pledge as a contribution to the goals of disarmament and of the enhancement of international peace and security.

This being our attitude, there can be no question that we have firm faith in the vital role of the United Nations in this field. Our faith is supported both in word and in deed, and it rests on a conviction that strengthening the United Nations and the role envisaged for it in its Charter is the principal means of encouraging countries to desist from the arms race. What is required, therefore, is to take practical steps to increase the effectiveness of our world Organization's activities in respect of disarmament. The United Nations must serve as a guide for all these efforts and as the crucible in which the sporadic efforts to save mankind from destruction should be fused into one endeavour to secure a future in which peace and prosperity prevail.

Mr. AL-SHAKAR (Bahrain) (interpretation from Arabic): At the outset, I have the pleasure to congratulate the Chairman warmly on his unanimous election to his post. I am fully convinced that with his experience and diplomatic skills he

(Mr. Al-Shakar, Bahrain)

will be able to guide the work of the First Committee at this session efficiently and bring it to a successful conclusion. Through him, I would warmly congratulate the other members of the Bureau, and wish them every success in the work ahead.

(Mr. Al-Shakar, Bahrain)

Our Committee's work is taking place this year against a background of world optimism resulting from détente and from the receding of confrontation, war and cold war between the two super-Powers, which had for long marked international relations. A new wind has begun to blow in international relations, as a result of which new and more rational thinking now prevails.

The world today is on the threshold of a new age, which demands of us sincere efforts to preserve human life and to establish a society ruled by law, so that peace and justice may prevail throughout the world.

Over the past century mankind has learned to its bitter cost the horrors of two world wars, which wreaked havoc in their path. Mankind has also experienced numerous regional conflicts and wars, the most serious of which have occurred during the past 50 years.

However, against the background of the new positive international developments, mankind has today come to a common, firm conviction that international peace and collective security are a common and indivisible issue for us all. If peace does not exist in one part of the world, that fact is reflected, to one degree or another, in the rest of the world. Consequently, the world's future will continue to be threatened unless everybody works for peaceful coexistence and mutual co-operation in order to strengthen peace and avert threats of war. That can be brought about, however, only if relations between States are built upon sound foundations, based on the principles of equality, mutual respect, non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, respect for the independence and sovereignty of States, devotion to the principles of good-neighbourliness, respect for the right to self-determination of all peoples under the yoke of occupation or foreign domination, and the settlement of disputes by peaceful means.

(Mr. Al-Shakar, Bahrain)

Fortunately, this approach to peaceful coexistence is increasingly being strengthened nowadays. Progress is being made in the conclusion of treaties to limit conventional and nuclear armaments. Concerted efforts employing the resources of the United Nations are also being made to settle many regional conflicts. The United Nations has thus regained its rightful role as an instrument for the co-ordination of international efforts to resolve world and regional problems. This trend, within the framework of international understanding, offers the United Nations a greater opportunity to play its proper role, in accordance with the rules of the Charter governing the peaceful settlement of disputes, thereby enabling it to put an end to hot-beds of tension around the world.

Hence, employment of the mechanisms of the international system to resolve regional problems becomes increasingly credible, which is fully consistent with the Charter. The credibility of the United Nations is thus restored and the indispensable and effective role that it can play is thus recognized.

The conditions that have imposed the entente have not yet, however, been brought to bear on all regional issues and conflicts; a number of pressing conflicts still remain pending. In the conditions of the present policy of entente, we cannot condone the fact that while conflicts in Latin America, Africa and Asia are being resolved, other urgent problems of importance with regard to international peace and security, such as those of Palestine and the Middle East, continue unresolved.

The world political climate has indeed improved, but not yet sufficiently. We commend the efforts made by the United States and the Soviet Union to reduce tension around the world. We also welcome the understanding, dialogue and fruitful co-operation developing between the two super-Powers in order to resolve many regional conflicts. Nevertheless, it is necessary to strengthen and expand that dialogue to embrace all conflicts. We look forward with optimism to the expected

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summit between President Gorbachev and President Bush early next summer. There can be no doubt that given the new international understanding and détente we are approaching a new era in international relations, marked by co-operation instead of confrontation, an era characterized by the dispelling of doubts about the strengthening of confidence-building measures, which has had a very positive impact on many relevant issues concerning the limitation of the super-Powers' armaments, and endeavours to halt the arms race and to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Last year the Soviet Union and the United States concluded a treaty to eliminate all their intermediate- and short-range missiles. We commend the contents of the agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union as set forth in their joint statement of 23 September 1989 (A/44/578). We hope that the two super-Powers will conclude more treaties limiting nuclear and strategic weapons and that they will reach agreement to reduce their offensive strategic weapons and to cut their arsenals of chemical weapons.

Likewise, we welcome the results achieved at the Paris Conference earlier this year aimed at achieving a complete ban on the production and use of chemical weapons. We also welcome, of course, the negotiations between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and Warsaw Pact countries, in the framework of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, to reduce the level of conventional weapons and forces in Europe. We hope that they will achieve an initial agreement during the coming year. We also hope that agreement will be reached on beginning negotiations to reduce the number of nuclear missiles, because those weapons have an unparalleled lethal and destructive capacity.

It need not be stressed that the cessation of nuclear-weapons programmes and the militarization of outer space will release sufficient funds to finance economic

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development projects, to meet successive economic crises and to support studies on the preservation of the environment and avert potential threats to the very survival of our planet.

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We hope that international efforts to conclude a convention on a complete and verifiable ban on nuclear testing world wide, will continue and lead to an integrated programme of comprehensive and general disarmament in the 1990s, to be carried out under effective international control with the participation of the United Nations, to create a denuclearized world free from weapons of mass destruction. Stockpiles of such weapons could destroy the entire world twice over. If there were to be a nuclear war, it would mean the end of civilization and the annihilation of mankind.

The concepts of interdependence are finally beginning to bear fruit and have become accepted facts of international life. There is thus a need to reaffirm here the close link that exists between disarmament and development. From the economic standpoint, we can no longer condone the expenditure of vast sums on arms build-ups and stockpiling, to the serious detriment of international economic life and the well-being of all peoples. Today there is a clear link between international security and the deterioration of economies the world over. Therefore, we must closely link peace and national security, on the one hand, and world economic development, on the other.

At the threshold of the twenty-first century it is intolerable that we live in a world in which enormous sums are spent on the production of weapons of mass destruction, sums far larger than what is needed to solve the problems of underdevelopment, poverty, illiteracy and disease combined. The struggle for armaments reduction is therefore the prerogative of all mankind, not just the two super-Powers or the two rival camps. Consequently co-operation and détente have come to be vital requirements of the age, and the principle of interdependence has accordingly become uncontroversial and irrefutable.

The regional arms-race in the Middle East - both traditional and nuclear - has assumed alarming proportions. Not only does Israel possess a host of

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sophisticated destructive weapons, but it is virtually certain that it has a powerful nuclear reactor at its Dimona facility. It also possesses locally produced nuclear weapons and warheads that can be carried by sophisticated long-range missiles. During Israel's testing of such weapons, one missile fell into the Mediterranean near the town of Benghazi in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, a fraternal Arab country. These facts constitute a warning that Israel's sophisticated long-range missiles could indeed strike Arab capitals and that they are a threat to the Arab peoples, since, given its aim of occupation and expansion, they could be used by Israel to impose its terms as faits accomplis. The fact that Israel possesses nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction is not only a threat to peace in the Middle East, but a threat to the entire world.

The Arab States, including my own country, have supported the call for the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East pursuant to relevant United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 43/65. In accordance with those resolutions, the Arab States have undertaken to comply with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. With respect to nuclear reactors, all countries that have such facilities should subject them to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards and monitoring. But Israel, on the contrary, has not only refused to accede to the non-proliferation Treaty; it has also refused to submit its nuclear facilities to IAEA safeguards and inspection, notwithstanding relevant United Nations resolutions, not to mention that Israel has gone further and set up a plant to process nuclear waste from Dimona and has plans to bury such material in occupied southern Lebanon. Israel's capability of producing nuclear weapons threatens not only the Arab States but also, as I have said, the very existence of human life and civilization. Israel is seeking, by direct and indirect aggression, to undermine the stability of the Arab world.

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Israel lives by the law of the jungle, not international law. It had no scruples, in June 1981, in attacking the Iraqi nuclear reactor near Baghdad, which had been built for peaceful purposes. Nor did it have any scruples in carrying out reconnaissance and espionage missions in Arab airspace from the Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean. Last year Israel launched the HORIZON I satellite, designed to further its plans of expansion and deterrence. It is difficult to understand that certain influential great Powers condone such Israeli actions, which are adverse to peace, and even provide Israel with what it needs to produce uranium, plutonium and other material, nuclear equipment and reactors. We consider it essential that the international community call upon Israel to accede to the non-proliferation Treaty and explicitly undertake not to use, produce or stockpile such weapons or devices. The international community must call upon Israel to subject its nuclear facilities to international control.

The situation is all the more serious because of the close co-operation that exists between the twin countries Israel and apartheid South Africa in both the military and the nuclear fields. The apartheid South African régime, like Israel, is seeking to impose a regional fait accompli to pursue its ambitions and designs, and is implementing a policy of deterrence, terror, intimidation and increased aggression against neighbouring States.

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We condemn the continuing co-operation between the authorities in Tel Aviv and Pretoria. We also feel that international efforts to halt that co-operation should be increased so as to compel the apartheid régime to stop playing with fire in southern Africa.

As regards the Indian Ocean, my country's Government supports the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace, adopted in 1971. We hope that the General Assembly will set a date for the holding of a conference on the Indian Ocean in the future, with a view to achieving the objectives of the Declaration. Fortunately, international life has in recent years been characterized by changes resulting from international détente and understanding, and the new rationality that prevails. This could be the prelude to a new international system that strengthens collective security, interdependence and multilateral co-operation.

Given these positive portents, the United Nations should develop a mechanism to bring about the peace yearned for all peoples, so that ours can be a world free from injustice, tyranny and terror and so that the principles of freedom for all peoples and security, justice and tranquillity for all mankind can be strengthened.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.