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Chairman: Mr. TAYLHARDAT (Venezuela)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEMS 49 TO 69 AND 151 (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT ITEMS

Mr. PETROVSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian): Allow me once again, Sir, to congratulate you upon your election to your high office as well as your appointment as your country's Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The general debate in the First Committee on political issues demonstrates that this session is organically linked to the new post-confrontation period that has begun in the life of the international community. As can be keenly sensed in the Committee's deliberations, the desire rigorously to search for ways of consolidating positive trends with practical decisions is a remarkable feature of this session.

The yearning for international co-operation and interaction among all States and for intensified activity by multilateral mechanisms is clearly discernible in all countries' approaches. Indeed, when we refer quite rightly to the revival of the United Nations, what we mean is mainly Member States' renewed confidence that its effectiveness can be enhanced. The collective will of States makes it possible to set in motion international co-operation mechanisms and to give effect to the ideals enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

The Soviet Union assigns a major role to the Organization and other international institutions in the future order of things. We attach crucial importance to enhancing the United Nations role and authority in international affairs. Our approach of principle to this unique international organization was described in Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev's article "Reality and Safeguards of a Secure World" of 17 September 1987 and in his address to the General Assembly on 7 December 1988.

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(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

Recently, Eduard Shevardnadze, Minister for Foreign Affairs, submitted a report to the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union entitled "On the implementation of the basic guidelines of Soviet foreign policy". I should like to draw attention to the major emphasis in his statement on the fact that Soviet foreign policy follows the path of honesty and truth and is based on the primacy of universal human values, moral integrity and ethics. These values are not abstract notions; they exist and do not lend themselves to arbitrary or selective interpretation. Their points of reference include generally recognized instruments - above all, the United Nations Charter and the declarations, covenants, conventions and resolutions approved and observed by the overwhelming majority of States.

It is that approach that enables us to be bold and honest in admitting the mistakes we have made and provides the guarantee that such mistakes will be rectified and ruled out in the future.

The primacy of universal human values implies that of international interaction, too. Accordingly, international institutions and mechanisms are called upon to play a directing, consolidating and integrating role and to serve as beacons of stability in today's interdependent world. Now that co-operation between States has entered a stage of co-creation and co-development, those institutions are moving to the forefront.

The statement by our Foreign Minister made special mention of the fact that our all-out support for the United Nations and our active participation in its activities are a major guideline of our foreign policy.

The Soviet Union's reappraisal of the role and place of the United Nations and other international mechanisms for multilateral interaction has gone hand in hand with the growing awareness that there do not exist problems of no concern to us.

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(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

Now that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics has embarked upon perestroika, efforts to render our measures compatible with international practices gain crucial importance.

Just as is in any other country, we believe that the state of the world economy is a matter of one's own well-being. The threat of environmental catastrophe is a matter of survival. Efforts to eradicate diseases and epidemics in other countries mean protecting the health of one's own nation.

Participation in the United Nations means reducing costs resulting from regional conflicts and tensions and the threat of a regional flare-up's escalating into a big war.

The conclusion of the Geneva Agreements on Afghanistan was a major success by the United Nations. The Security Council's efforts contributed to the cessation of hostilities near our borders, between Iran and Iraq. Changes in our conceptual approaches to the United Nations have entailed practical steps to revamp our policy here. This is the objective set forth in the Soviet Union's newly adopted overall strategy towards the United Nations and associated international organizations, a strategy based on such fundamental principles as consistent "de-ideologization" of the United Nations and depolitization of its specialized agencies; focusing on objectives within their competence; making those agencies universal by encouraging all members of the international community to take part in their activities; streamlining them and focusing their activities on top-priority objectives; making optimal use of their physical and financial resources; and launching broad and diverse exchanges of information with those agencies.

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(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

This new strategic policy has its basis in our compliance, as a matter of principle, with the standards developed by international organizations as progressive models of the behaviour of States in almost every field of human endeavour. We are firmly committed to treating the decisions of international organizations in a uniform manner. At the conclusion of sessions of the General Assembly we intend to make a thorough examination of their outcome, draw our own practical conclusions and translate them into our policies.

The current revival of the United Nations - most strikingly illustrated by the increasingly successful construction of a new peace and the settlement of regional conflicts, has also encompassed the field of disarmament. A contributing factor here is that disarmament is beginning to move away from declarations towards concrete action. With the entry into force of the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles - the INF Treaty - the process of nuclear disarmament began to gain momentum. The early conclusion at Vienna of an agreement to limit and reduce conventional arms and armed forces is now a problem that can be dealt with in a practical way, and a draft convention banning chemical weapons is being finalized.

So far, Soviet-American relations has been the sphere in which the most dynamic changes in the disarmament field have taken place. Much progress has been made in Soviet-American relations. The likelihood of an agreement on a 50 per cent cut in strategic offensive weapons has been brought much closer, and tangible progress has been made in talks on the limitation and cessation of nuclear-weapon tests and in other domains.

As a result of our recent meetings in Washington and Wyoming the Soviet-American dialogue has reached a new level of openness and businesslike significance, with problems being raised in broader terms and with understanding

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(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

and goodwill gaining in scope. Thus the United Nations and other multilateral forums have fresh opportunities unfolding before them and are led to feel their objectives are quite feasible. On the other hand, if the process of arms-limitation and disarmament is to be uninterrupted, irreversible and truly global, new emphasis should be placed on the need for multilateralism.

A comprehensive approach to the search for security calls for constructive parallelism in bilateral and multilateral efforts that should give reciprocal encouragement in the field of disarmament. The fact is that multilateral efforts and understandings are required to bring about the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, to provide guarantees that they will not be revived, to ban all nuclear testing, to prevent the spread of the arms race to outer space, to agree upon the parameters of reasonably sufficient military capabilities and to render them exclusively defensive in structure. It is advisable to activate multilateral mechanisms for tackling such major issues as the non-proliferation and elimination of chemical and other types of weapons of mass destruction, the reduction and limitation of conventional arms, world military spending and arms supplies.

What is important is that the activities of the United Nations should be geared to applying a new model of security on an international scale and to switching over from the principles of excessive armament to those of reasonable sufficiency.

A wealth of experience has been accumulated and major achievements have been made in the area of multilateral disarmament. Those include the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Treaty on the Prohibition of the Emplacement of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction on the Sea-Bed, the Convention on bacteriological weapons and many other major instruments that consolidate contractual, legal, moral and political standards.

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(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

Multilateral disarmament also possesses a fairly ramified infrastructure of diverse mechanisms, which include the principal bodies of the United Nations, namely, the General Assembly, the Security Council and such forums as the Conference on Disarmament, the United Nations Disarmament Commission and a number of others.

In other words, all this is the living matter of multilateral disarmament. In classical philosophy we read that the existence of matter resides in its action, and that it is only through action that it fills space and time. Nowadays we see it as our objective to make all existing mechanisms efficient and to move them into higher gear. We believe that, as the most representative and prestigious democratic forum of States, the General Assembly has a role to play, and first and foremost in clearing the way for the uninterrupted evolution of disarmament and creating a favourable environment centered on a search for constructive approaches to solving common problems.

We view the General Assembly as a forum not merely for the airing of ideas but also for making them more meaningful by means of collective reasoning, a forum for genuine co-creation that heeds the opinions and concerns of both sides and experience gained with a view to arriving at generally acceptable recommendations and finding ways and means of solving emerging problems.

In this context we feel that we should refer especially to the special sessions of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The lasting value of the Final Document adopted by consensus at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament lies in the fact that it consolidated views on the principles governing the actions of States in attaining common objectives and charted a programme of action, an agenda and mechanisms for multilateral disarmament.

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(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

The third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament proved to be a useful forum and a unique new thinking laboratory. The potential of the fresh approaches and ideas submitted to the world community for consideration at that time continues to work, and it will be a long time before it is used up. Given the new conditions that now obtain, the time appears to be ripe for us to ponder in earnest whether we should not, in future, introduce the practice of holding special sessions on individual and particularly pressing disarmament issues rather than solely on general matters.

In our view the consistent implementation of relevant General Assembly resolutions and the upgrading of the moral and political status of documents adopted by consensus would help to enhance the role of the General Assembly and its effectiveness in the field of disarmament. Consensus reached at the decision-making stage should be followed by general agreement at the stage of practical implementation. Of course, close attention should be paid to all of the General Assembly's recommendations.

I would point out that we are not urging others to do that while we stand on the sidelines. On the contrary, we are willing to stand up and be counted, for we pay attention to how people react to our deeds and words. Our new political thinking has brought us a different scale of criteria for appraising our behaviour in the light of universal human values. For example, with reference to Afghanistan, and bearing in mind the fact that our action was condemned by over 100 Members of the United Nations, we eventually came to realize that we had set ourselves against the international community, violated rules of conduct and defied man's universal interests. As a result, we have withdrawn our troops from Afghanistan.

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(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

Let us take another example, this time from the field of disarmament. For a number of years, we voted against the resolution banning the manufacture of fissionable materials for military purposes; later, we began to abstain from voting and now we give it our active support. Convincing evidence that this is not a tactical shift in our position but rather a radical review of it is our concrete programme - which we announced yesterday during the discussion in the General Assembly of the IAEA report - for the withdrawal of all our reactors producing weapons-grade plutonium from service before the year 2000. This major unilateral measure now gives us a moral right to go further: we are prepared to co-sponsor the relevant draft resolution.

We believe that the contribution made by the United Nations to multilateral disarmament would be greatly increased if the Security Council, as the body with special responsibility for maintaining world peace and security as part of its remit, were to take up arms-control issues. We support making full and effective use of the relevant, constitutional, capabilities of the Security Council.

It is well known - and we think highly of this in our country - that the Security Council has done and continues to do much in the most important area of its activities today: settling regional conflicts and carrying out peace-keeping operations. However, it is also quite clear that this is not the limit of its potential and that there is a place in it for disarmament issues too. These could in fact become subjects for co-operation between members of the Council. Incidentally, in putting forward the idea of developing, multilaterally, an agreement on measures to reduce the risk of nuclear war, our assumption is that this issue has very much to do with the work of the Security Council in untying the tight knots of conflicts and crises. We believe that it would be possible, as part of the consultations between the permanent members of the Council, to discuss the

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(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

idea of, for example, developing an agreement on measures to reduce the risk of nuclear war. It would be useful if military experts from the countries members of the Security Council and representatives of other countries could hold consultations in the United Nations Military Staff Committee in order to examine military political problems, including arms control and peace-keeping operations. I would particularly like to emphasize that this suggestion is no ready-made recipe. Perhaps other people will come up with even better suggestions for ways and means to step up the work of the Military Staff Committee. We are prepared to discuss such suggestions substantively and constructively.

The Secretary-General has an important role in the activities of the United Nations in respect of strengthening international peace and security through disarmament. His annual reports on the work of the Organization have become an important factor in the renewal processes going on within it. We believe that these documents, which abound in profound, analytical suggestions, require the most attentive and thoughtful treatment and serve as reliable points of reference. The Soviet Union pays close heed to the Secretary-General's opinion and values his recommendations highly, particularly those on arms limitation and disarmament issues, and endeavours to help in translating them into practical measures to enhance the Organization's effectiveness.

The creation of various mechanisms subordinate to the United Nations Secretary-General and assisting him to work effectively has fully proved its worth. For example, a mechanism has been set up and is now in operation to inquire into cases where chemical or biological weapons may have been used. We welcome the report, prepared by the Secretary-General's highly qualified experts, which streamlines and develops the basic principles and procedures for investigating cases in which chemical weapons may have been used, and we will follow its

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(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

recommendations in practice. Our delegation is authorized to state here today that the Soviet Union is prepared to admit to its territory the corresponding United Nations inspection teams, in accordance with the agreed procedures.

In our view, further steps in this direction could also be considered, for example, by developing a similar mechanism for investigating instances where there may have been violations of the Convention on inhumane weapons.

We believe that a transition from general statements to practical action and to adopting meaningful decisions could be ensured through enhancing the effectiveness and productivity of the work of the First Committee, which is called upon to help find areas where common ground already exists or is emerging and could in due time be addressed at the relevant negotiations.

In this context, we consider to be very useful the discussion in the First Committee on a comprehensive approach to strengthening international peace and security, and to disarmament issues; the First Committee's treatment of issues to do with increasing the efficiency and output of the United Nations has also generally not been without benefit. I think I reflect the common view in saying that the effectiveness of the First Committee itself in disarmament issues can and should be increased. We think that we should focus primarily on a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach to appraising the decisions the Committee takes, in which the main criterion would be the actual effectiveness and practical significance of those decisions for progress in multilateral disarmament. Rationalizing the work of this important body of the United Nations General Assembly would without a doubt be facilitated by cutting the number of resolutions adopted and increasing the proportion of consensus decisions, and we are prepared to work, together with all other parties, constructively in this direction.

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(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

The Geneva Conference on Disarmament has a special place in multilateral disarmament efforts; it is a unique multilateral body for negotiations on a wide range of arms-limitation and disarmament issues. Representatives from all continents, military and political alliances, non-aligned and neutral countries participate in its work on an equal footing. The Conference is showing in practice that it is capable of proceeding from exchanges of views to elaborating major decisions on its agenda items. The top priority for the Conference is to complete the elaboration of a convention on the total and effective prohibition of the development, production and stockpiling of all forms of chemical weapons and on their destruction. An early conclusion of the convention would substantially increase the Conference's authority and would provide a major impetus for intensifying work in other areas, above all on such matters as the cessation of nuclear tests, scaling down the nuclear-arms race, preventing nuclear war, and prohibiting the militarization of outer space. The Soviet Union is in favour of ultimately transforming that multilateral forum into a univeral, standing and active body for disarmament negotiations.

I turn now to the activities of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. One can hardly fail to note that its rate of work has dropped somewhat recently. However, this does not mean, in our view, that there are grounds for raising the question whether this integral part of the United Nations disarmament machinery should be abolished. We think that our efforts should be concentrated on something different: on developing concrete measures to step up the Commission's work and increase its effectiveness.

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(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

We think that that could be achieved in a variety of ways - by streamlining the agenda, transferring the discussion of some individual issues on which there has been no progress for a long time to a two- or three-year basis and some other measures. The main thing, however, is that fresh, constructive ideas and approaches will be needed to make it possible to maintain all the positive assets we have accumulated thus far.

We note with satisfaction that it is precisely this objective that is being pursued by the informal working group headed by the Permanent Representative of Zaire. The Soviet Union will contribute in every possible way to the achievement of generally acceptable recommendations on this matter.

The review conferences on various existing Treaties play an important role in the multilateral disarmament process. We attach exceptionally high importance to the forthcoming Fourth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which is to be held next year. Now that the process of nuclear disarmament has actually begun, we hope that that Conference will be an important forum for promoting the consolidation of the non-proliferation régime, which is one of the supporting props of security in the nuclear-space age.

Studies conducted under United Nations auspices play a prominent role in solving practical arms-control and disarmament problems on a multilateral basis. The findings of those studies provide Member States with practical tools and recommendations on solutions to various individual issues. In this connection, I note that the Soviet Union has overcome its long-felt distrust of, and scepticism towards, that side of United Nations activities, and we intend to play a very active part in studies conducted by the Organization and its specialized agencies, including the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR).

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(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

We welcome the current positive developments in the activities of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Studies, whose new format we believe enables it to provide even greater assistance to the Secretary-General on disarmament matters than before, and we advocate fuller and more effective use of its capabilities, given the impressive scientific, intellectual and disarmament potential of its members.

The activities of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research have also intensified, and the quality of its studies has improved, as has their practical value. The Soviet Union supports UNIDIR's activities, and has pledged a voluntary contribution of 250,000 roubles and $20,000 to the Institute in 1990.

An important element in United Nations programme activities in the field of disarmament is the World Disarmament Campaign. In supporting the goals and objectives of that Campaign, the Soviet Union is making during the current session a new voluntary contribution of 500,000 roubles to the World Disarmament Campaign for 1990 to 1993. Let me take this opportunity to point out the high level and good organization of regional conferences within the World Disarmament Campaign framework held in Kyoto, Dagomys and Kiev. We shall seek to ensure that the United Nations conference on conversion, to be held in Moscow in 1990, proceeds in the same constructive spirit.

The smooth functioning of the United Nations machinery for disarmament and the implementation of relevant United Nations programmes in great measure depends also on how effective the work of the Department for Disarmament Affairs is. In our view, the Department, under the able stewardship of Mr. Akashi, Under-Secretary-General, is successfully coping with the constantly increasing responsibilities conferred on it, and therefore deserves the highest acclaim.

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(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

The internationalization of the disarmament process necessitates tapping the entire potential of multilateralism and, among other things, convening, as appropriate, new forums to resolve emerging problems.

We greatly value the initiatives taken by France and Australia in holding conferences on chemical weapons in Paris and Canberra, which have been crowned with success. We also embrace the idea of extending the scope of the 1963 Moscow Treaty to cover underground nuclear tests. We hail the United States initiative to work out the open skies régime, and we shall take part in the conference proposed by Canada to discuss the issue.

We are also prepared to discuss on a multilateral basis such problems as international arms transfers and to take part in the elaboration of parameters for an appropriate register.

A separate negotiating mechanism needs to be created to address the problem of ending the naval arms race. The artificial exemption of that major component of States' military power from negotiations can hardly be considered normal. This matter could be discussed at the United Nations at a meeting of military experts from the major naval Powers and other interested countries.

A crucial task for the United Nations machinery, and generally for multilateral diplomacy, is to help build confidence and assert greater openness in relations between States. An increasing number of States are advancing interesting, bold and far-reaching proposals in that field, intended to provide effective assistance in removing concerns and clarifying ambiguities on the basis of objective information. In our view, this problem is now ripe for substantive discussion, and we express our support for the upcoming consideration of the question of objective information in the Disarmament Commission.

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(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

Verification is an essential element of openness and transparency, and an important measure, in its own right, for the promotion of disarmament. We attach paramount importance to the study of the United Nations role in the area of verification, conducted now with the participation of a Soviet representative, and we hope that, on the basis of an in-depth examination of proposals submitted by various States, the experts involved will present their recommendations, which could give the international community guidance in that area.

With the growing internationalization of the dialogue on military security issues, the role played by the regional factor is increasing in an objective way. We support the regional efforts of States to reach agreements on conventional armaments as well as on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free and chemical-weapon-free zones and areas of reduced tensions, whose implementation would create footholds, as it were, for ultimately launching a process of global disarmament. In this context, I should like particularly to mention the progress at the Vienna negotiations on the limitation and reduction of conventional armaments and armed forces, which appear to be an effective working model of a productive search for solutions to convoluted knots of problems, as well as at the talks on the development of confidence-building measures. I wish also to refer to the successful operation of the Rarotonga Treaty, and the accession of new parties to it.

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(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

The ideas I have outlined today should be viewed as an invitation to the Committee to engage in constructive dialogue on ways and means of realizing the potential of multilateral disarmament. In a situation where, in effect, disarmament has for the first time begun to seem really tangible, we feel it vitally important to establish a constructive parallelism bewteen bilateral and multilateral efforts.

I wish to emphasize that accelerating the pace of the disarmament train and giving the green light in all areas - unilateral, bilateral and multilateral - represents, we are deeply convinced, the main road on the way towards excluding the threat of self-annihilation of the life of mankind and towards charting the route towards a nuclear-weapon-free and non-violent world.

Mr. HOULLEZ (Belgium) (interpretation from French): The Belgian delegation is especially pleased to see you, Sir, the representative of Venezuela to the Conference on Disarmament, presiding over the work of the First Committee at this session of the General Assembly. Your long experience in the disarmament field, your professional qualifications and the interest you have already shown in committing the necessary time for consideration of draft resolutions will, I trust, lead to efficient, calm and quiet deliberations. Please rest assured, Mr. Chairman, of my delegation's full co-operation. I should also like to thank your predecessor, Mr. Roche, for the exemplary manner in which he guided the work of the First Committee at the forty-third session of the General Assembly.

The representative of France, its Chairman for this semester, has already eloquently expressed the views of the 12 members of the European Community on the broad range of questions that relate to arms-limitation and disarmament. Needless to say, Belgium fully shares the ideas put forward in that context; however, I should like to expand upon our position on certain points that we view as priorities.

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(Mr. Houllez, Belgium)

Many speakers - among them the Belgium Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Marc Eyskens - have stressed the continuing positive developments in East-West relations, which have moved from the climate of cold war towards peaceful co-operation. That phenomenon is likely to encourage progress in all areas of arms-limitation and disarmament.

We are particularly pleased at the positive developments in the parallel negotiations taking place at Vienna, which answer to our concern to see a true order of peace and stability established in Europe based on the balanced and mutual reduction in the levels of conventional weapons and on the elimination of the principal imbalances. The priority goal is to reduce forces capable of large-scale offensive action and to eliminate the capability for surprise attack. Such reductions will be accompanied by effective measures of confidence-building, transparency and verification.

That concrete approach to the question could serve as inspiration in other regions of the world for promoting, in a suitable manner and in keeping with conditions obtaining in those areas and with the wishes of the various countries involved, the cause of disarmament and arms-limitation.

As the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs recently stated, the philosophy of disarmament should spread to all the regions of the world and should not be limited to Europe alone, even though the great concentration of forces on the European continent warrants the important initiatives that have been ongoing there for some time now. That also explains Belgium's interest in regional-disarmament measures that would result from initiatives taken by the countries of a given region.

That concern was evidenced by my country's submission of General Assembly resolution 42/39 E, which was adopted by consensus. Our interest in that question has not waned, and I am in a position today to announce that Belgium intends to introduce another draft resolution on that question this year.

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(Mr. Houllez, Belgium)

Let us not forget that billions of dollars are spent yearly in the third world on the procurement of weapons - in other words, several times the total of development aid. The arms race is an undue burden on fragile economies, a phenomenon that is aggravated by the desire for high-technology weapons. For example, we note with growing concern the acquisition or development of ballistic missiles by an increasing number of States, a situation that, especially when linked with chemical or nuclear capabilities, could lead to an arms race in several regions of the world and could hinder efforts to control the arms race and military expenditures.

After having first referred to conventional disarmament throughout the world in order to emphasize the importance of that aspect of arms control and disarmament, I should now like to turn to the area of chemical weapons, which is dealt with in the Conference on Disarmament.

It cannot be denied that prospects for concluding in the near future a comprehensive, universal and verifiable convention on the prohibition of the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons and on their destruction have improved since the forty-third session of the General Assembly.

I see several reasons for that. First, the Conference convened at Paris from 7 to 11 January this year, by reaffirming the will to respect the 1925 Geneva Protocol and by unanimously adopting a declaration, gave new political impetus to the Geneva negotiations. The results obtained there are reflected in the new rolling text that is set forth in the report of the Conference on Disarmament.

Secondly, there was the restructuring of subsidiary bodies and the dynamic work accomplished by the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, Ambassador Pierre Morel, who, in a remarkable way, worked to achieved the objectives set in Paris.

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(Mr. Houllez, Belgium)

Thirdly, there is universality, already evidenced by the presence of 149 countries at the Paris Conference and by the new accessions to the Geneva Protocol, and reflected as well in the ever-increasing number of observers at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. That development is a sine qua non for success in the negotiations.

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(Mr. Houllez, Belgium)

Fourthly, the breakthrough in the bilateral talks between the United States and the Soviet Union, which cannot but contribute to the multilateral negotiations, especially in the field of verification;

Fifthly, right here in the General Assembly President Bush recently made a particularly important statement, reiterating the desire of the United States that a total and universal prohibition of chemical weapons be achieved, and we are convinced that his offer to reduce, as of now, before the conclusion of the negotiations, United States stocks of chemical weapons to less than 20 per cent of their present level is an appreciable gesture that will contribute to the success of the work at Geneva and, eventually, to the implementation of the future convention; we are gratified by the favourable response from the Soviet Union to this offer;

Sixthly, my country welcomes the positive outcome of the Canberra Conference, and wishes to thank the Australian Government for that initiative, which ensures that the dialogue between the Conference on Disarmament and the industry will continue.

This listing of positive elements should not, however, cause us to forget that many obstacles remain to be overcome and that the results obtained at the last session do not fulfil the hopes raised by the Paris Conference. Belgium firmly hopes the Conference on Disarmament will be able to overcome the obstacles which remain.

My delegation, in the name of universality, shares the concern shown by some countries that their voice should be heard in the elaboration of a convention and that they should play a more active part in the process. Of course, any measure to speed up the destruction of the large stockpiles of the only two countries that have declared they possess chemical weapons is of vital importance, but we cannot

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(Mr. Houllez, Belgium)

disregard the fact that other countries possess chemical weapons or the capacity to produce them. Recent experience has shown that the danger of their being used is indeed a real one, especially in regional and subregional conflicts. To be credible and effective, prohibition must be universal and total. We must avoid any measure or situation likely to revive or increase mistrust or indecision on the part of countries that might be tempted to use chemical weapons, finding justification for such action in other countries' assumed or real lack of chemical weapons. We must also avoid establishing arbitrary linkages with other aspects of disarmament.

If the objective of negotiations on chemical disarmament is the total and universal elimination of chemical weapons - the best guarantee that they will not be used - we cannot but be astonished at any position that would exclude from those negotiations any country wishing to be associated with them. Not only would such a policy of exclusion be contrary to the spirit and letter of the Paris Declaration: it would also raise serious doubts as to the willingness of all States to contribute effectively and concretely to a disarmament process that by its nature can achieve full significance only when countries that at the outset were separated by divergencies of interest or policy are joined together in a common effort. The disarmament that all the States of the planet have so ardently desired would be seriously jeopardized if it were to operate only between allies.

We must therefore step up our efforts and avoid creating any doubt about the positive outcome of the negotiations. We hope that the intersessional meetings and the new session will buttress the hope that our work will be concluded in the near future as a result of a constructive and vigilant approach by all the negotiators aimed at averting the danger of a chemical war as effectively as possible.

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(Mr. Houllez, Belgium)

I take this opportunity to recall that the Belgian Government is prepared to host the organization which the convention on chemical weapons would create.

While considerable progress has been made in the area of chemical weapons, there remains an aspect of the Conference on Disarmament which gives rise to legitimate concerns, and that is nuclear weapons. Even so, there are encouraging signs of a favourable climate for future discussions. The second session of the preparatory committee for the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons took place in an atmosphere of calm, and confirmed the importance Member States attach to that primary instrument in the spirit in which it was concluded in 1970.

The recent progress in the area of verification protocols at the Wyoming meeting will doubtless facilitate the ratification of the 1974 Treaty limiting underground nuclear weapon tests and the 1976 Treaty on peaceful nuclear explosions. Similarly we welcome the resumption of the talks which are to lead to a strategic arms reduction treaty, and we note with satisfaction that these talks are no longer linked to any condition other than that of achieving an appropriate treaty at the earliest possible date. Furthermore, the INF Treaty continues to be implemented satisfactorily.

However, in the nuclear field also, disarmament initiatives cannot be the exclusive preserve of only two States. For this reason, we believe it is imperative for all participants in the Conference on Disarmament without exception to agree to grant an adequate mandate to a special committee on a nuclear-test ban. So far, all efforts - and they have been many and intense - have been in vain, despite the new dynamic chosen by the two super-Powers, which has been expressed in the verification field. Now, without giving ourselves up to any

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(Mr. Houllez, Belgium)

overblown and dangerous illusions on the need to give precedence a priori to multilateral negotiation, it is none the less true that a forum such as the Conference on Disarmament offers opportunities for progress, provided all-or-nothing approach is avoided. Belgium has said before, and repeats now, that for us the objective remains a total and definitive halt to tests. But Belgium continues to favour a gradual, step-by-step approach, which it thinks more realistic in the present circumstances. It is Belgium's opinion that the number of nuclear tests should be progressively reduced.

It would in our opinion be unwise to deliberate on a test ban outside the Conference on Disarmament, which has available to it the technical contributions of the group of seismology experts. Parallel initiatives may have some symbolic meaning, but very little chance of success.

I would not wish to conclude without reaffirming the importance Belgium attaches to the role of the United Nations in the field of arms control and disarmament, in particular the Security Council, the First Committee and the Disarmament Commission.

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(Mr. Houllez, Belgium)

My country fully shares the view expressed by the Presidency of the European Community that we should seek more efficiency. For our Committee that would mean fewer resolutions, the combining of similar resolutions and a systematic search for consensus.

Unfortunately, we must note that the last session of the Disarmament Commission, where there should be in-depth discussion on new aspects of disarmament, was a complete failure, no agreement being reached on any of the agenda items. It is therefore urgently necessary to re-examine the Commission's role and functioning, in order to guarantee that there will be useful and concrete discussions, in which quality prevails over quantity.

Several solutions are possible, and we exclude none, but it would be dangerous to try to continue on the present path, which would be to run the risk of creating total apathy.

I have tried in my statement to emphasize the need for concrete achievements, rather than rhetorical statements, with regard to disarmament, in order to increase effectiveness in the quest for peace. That should be our common goal, and I have no doubt that the Committee's activities in the current session will help bring us closer to it.

Mr. AYALA LASSO (Ecuador) (interpretation from Spanish): Allow me to begin, Sir, by warmly congratulating you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. I have been honoured by your friendship for a number of years, and I have seen for myself your outstanding achievements in international affairs. I am sure that your human qualities and professional skills guarantee the fullest success of the First Committee's work Through you, I wish to convey my congratulations to all the other officers of the Committee.

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(Mr. Ayala Lasso, Ecuador)

The international scene is now acquiring new aspects. There have been political developments which should mean better days ahead for our peoples. However, these positive developments have not been accompanied by the necessary and urgent advances in economic and social affairs. As was pointed out at the ninth summit meeting of the non-aligned countries, held in Belgrade, it is impossible for a détente lacking economic and social content to last very long.

Disarmament and development are imperatively needed in the quest for stable peace. Conflict is born where there is hunger, misery and despair. In turn, conflict aggravates the state of poverty and makes it unbearable. Confrontation means violations of human rights and the dignity of man. As Dr. Diego Cordovez, Foreign Minister of Ecuador, has said,

> "The lack of security in the world ... has many deep-rooted causes. Among them are the violence in the large urban centres; the difficult situation of the peasants; the deterioration of the environment and quality of life; poor working conditions and low pay; the stifling practices of those who wield financial power; food imbalances and unmet health needs; and the lack of opportunity for the young to use their imagination and energy. They are also to be found in the failure to make the unfair international order more democratic, and in lack of respect for human rights and the sovereignty of nations through unjustified interference." (A/44/PV.7, pp. 81-82)

In an interdependent world, with a tight network of international relations, it is the responsibility of all to seek the well-being of mankind and it is now essential that we work together to find concrete answers quickly. That task is laid down in the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, whose goals will have to be attained, even within the financial limitations which are such a constraint on the Organization.

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(Mr. Ayala Lasso, Ecuador)

My delegation agrees that there is a need to plan more appropriately the First Committee's treatment of the items before it, without prejudice to the fact that certain subjects should be dealt with in other bodies that also consider disarmament matters. On the other hand, we advocate permanent co-ordination between the bodies and forums of the United Nations system with regard to disarmament matters. We must avoid a loss of efficiency and duplicating efforts. Otherwise, in the long run time will be lost in dealing with an urgent task.

I wish to refer now to a few specific subjects involved in the process which will enable man to achieve peace through disarmament.

After a nuclear conflagration, the frontiers between nations would disappear, but not in order to produce a peaceful community of nations, but because of the common denominator of the planet's destruction. Therefore, nuclear disarmament is a matter of priority, involving the whole international community. All of us - big or small, rich or poor, those with nuclear weapons and those without - would be the victims if a nuclear conflagration were to occur. Accordingly, we are all interested and all involved in progress in this field. This is yet further proof of the need for bipolarity to give way to multipolarity, and with it to an atmosphere more conducive to understanding between the Powers and the whole international community. We hope that the progress made in relations between the United States and the Soviet Union will continue to be consolidated and broadened, so that the initial disarmament steps - those taken with regard to intermediate-range weapons - will lead to agreements covering strategic nuclear weapons, short-range nuclear weapons and conventional forces.

The Fourth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is to be held soon in Geneva. Making that Treaty universal would be an effective step towards nuclear disarmament and would mark a qualitative change in international relations. It is in the interest of all

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(Mr. Ayala Lasso, Ecuador)

mankind that the process continue beyond 1995 and be consolidated as a mechanism to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and steer the use of nuclear energy towards peaceful purposes, promoting an increase of international co-operation to that end.

My delegation has noted the progress with regard to chemical weapons. The Paris and Canberra Conferences and the talks between the United States and the Soviet Union are bringing about an appropriate atmosphere for producing a juridical framework for the prohibition of the manufacture, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons.

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(Mr. Ayala Lasso, Ecuador)

Ecuador fully supports this common effort and appeals to all States to increase the action on this important issue. It would be easier, now, to stop manufacturing chemical weapons than it would be, later, to destroy the arsenals of such lethal weapons, which have already caused so much moral and material damage.

My country supports, and participates in, all initiatives tending to the creation, through the concerted will of States in various regions of the world, of zones of peace, demilitarized zones, and nuclear-weapon-free zones. To broaden the frontiers of peace and confidence among peoples, it is essential that this will should manifest itself in other parts of the world. Thus the whole planet could be composed of zones of peace and co-operation. Any nuclear test is an obstacle to the maintenance of zones of peace. It is therefore essential that progress be made in respect of commitments to establish or broaden the legal framework for a total ban on nuclear-weapon tests.

Verification is vital to the fulfilment of the commitments to suspend nuclear tests. The Conference on Disarmament, in its report, observes that certain countries feel that verification is a political issue. Clearly, if States had the political will to advance along the road of disarmament, modern technology could be used to meet the requirements of verification and to facilitate the fulfilment of disarmament commitments. We hope very much that this political will will be manifested in concrete action rather than in mere declarations of principle.

Ecuador has always supported disarmament initiatives in Latin America. It signed the Declaration of Ayacucho and the Washington Declaration. Its willingness to negotiate such progressive disarmament agreements indicated progress. Ecuador maintains its commitment, which, indeed, is now stronger than ever in view of the economic crisis afflicting the entire region. It is essential that resources be augmented if growth and economic development are to be revived. This can be done through an appropriate and realistic disarmament policy.

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(Mr. Ayala Lasso, Ecuador)

The Ecuadorian initiative in securing an agreement on the limitation of military procurement was supported by the Andean presidents, and the agreement was enshrined in the recent Cartagena declaration. My country again states its position and hopes very much that in the future a suitable climate will develop, leading to progress in this field.

The arms trade is one of the main obstacles to peace. As we all know, peace is not merely the absence of armed conflict; it is also the rejection of violence in all its manifestations and the adoption of a positive attitude of solidarity and co-operation, an attitude of identification with freedom, democracy and justice. There is, however, a cruel reality which today prevents the consolidation of an atmosphere of peace in much of Latin America. The arms trade, which feeds terrorism and the activities of the drug traffickers, which corrupts individuals and destabilizes States, was described well by President Virgilio Barco of Colombia when he addressed the General Assembly.

My country believes that the universal conscience is maturing as regards the need to adopt positive disarmament measures. Ecuador believes that, just as the great Powers are obliged to apply good faith and urgency in fullest measure to the negotiations in order that broad and effective agreements might be achieved, we, the smaller countries, also have an important role to play. For this purpose, our attitude must be equally dynamic and vigilant. In the last analysis, we are convinced that all of us must take an active part in making the Earth a peaceful, safe and progressive world.

Mr. HASSAN (United Arab Emirates) (interpretation from Arabic): It is my honour to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I am confident that your wisdom and experience will enable the Committee to produce encouraging results.

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(Mr. Hassan, United Arab Emirates)

At the present time when man is improving his potential and his ability to attain greater progress and a higher level of civilization, at this time when he is working hard to harness his scientific and technological development to meet his needs, science and technology, unfortunately, are not always geared to meeting the requirements of human development. Sometimes they are geared rather to the elimination of mankind. To a large extent, technical progress is devoted to the manufacture of tools of destruction. Moreover, huge resources are wasted on their manufacture.

Special sessions, conferences and symposia to discuss the problem of reducing, banning, eliminating and destroying armaments, as well as the conclusion of bilateral, regional and multilateral agreements and protocols on this issue, are testimony to the fact that the international community is aware of the need to eliminate these weapons before they can undermine human civilization - even human life.

There is no doubt that people everywhere are aware of the negative effects of military expenditure on economic development, human resources, financial flows, indebtedness, socio-cultural conditions and civic services at different levels. It is a fact that the reduction of military activity can release resources that cannot otherwise be used for socio-economic projects. Moreover, the millions of people engaged in the military sectors can become an important element in increasing the rate of development.

Experts emphasize that military research and development consume about 25 per cent of the global research-and-development budget. Moreover, a proportionate percentage of scientists and engineers work in this field. The accumulation of arms creates a climate of anxiety, fear and insecurity which has a negative effect on the efforts to achieve steady economic development.

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(Mr. Hassan, United Arab Emirates)

Now that humanity has realized the danger of possessing sophisticated weaponry and weapons of mass destruction, it is calling for their abandonment and their destruction. Hence the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles - INF Treaty. While we express our satisfaction at the conclusion of that historic Treaty, we hope that it is only the first in a series of agreements that will lead to the total elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

In the meantime we welcome the negotiations between the two super-Powers towards a 50 per cent reduction in their strategic nuclear forces. We hope that these negotiations will succeed, that the desired objective will be achieved in service to humanity as a whole.

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(Mr. Hassan, United Arab Emirates)

We also hope that other nuclear-weapon States will negotiate among themselves a reduction of their nuclear arsenals and that all nuclear-weapon States will work out a programme for the progressive and continued reduction of such arsenals so that a world free from nuclear weapons can become a reality. The cessation of all nuclear testing is but the initial step towards our ultimate objective, which is the elimination of nuclear weapons. This can only be achieved through broadening the scope of the partial test-ban Treaty and thus creating a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban Treaty for all environments.

The Final Declaration of the Paris Conference, held in January 1989, was a positive step towards the elimination of chemical weapons, as was the Geneva Protocol of 1925 banning the use of chemical and biological means of warfare.

My country, which participated in the Paris Conference, is aware of the serious consequences of using chemical weapons, and it calls for their elimination. While we condemn the use, production and stockpiling of all kinds of chemical weapons, we deem it important to deal with chemical weapons concurrently with other weapons of mass destruction. It would not make sense to ban chemical weapons while leaving the door open to nuclear and other weapons.

The Canberra Government-Industry Conference against Chemical Weapons demonstrated the increasing awareness of the grave dangers inherent in the use of chemical substances other than for the benefit of humanity. We welcome its summary statement and hope that private-sector producers of traditional weapons will hold a similar conference with Governments.

My delegation welcomes the statement of 23 September 1989 by the Secretary of State of the United States of America and the Foreign Minister of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on chemical and biological weapons and hopes it will be followed by practical steps leading to the total elimination of both countries'

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(Mr. Hassan, United Arab Emirates)

stockpiles of such weapons. It was with satisfaction that we heard the representatives of the two super-Powers declare their intention to eliminate those weapons.

At the beginning of the age of détente and at this time of qualitative progress in the relationship between the two super-Powers and the resultant favourable developments in the international climate, wisdom dictates that we grasp the opportunity afforded by the desire to replace confrontation with peace and benefit from the mutual willingness to reduce the arsenals of nuclear and conventional weapons. We should therefore pave the way for the reduction of naval armaments, which are a grave threat to our world, with so many destroyers and aircraft carriers constantly prowling the seas, causing concern and instability and further contributing to the pollution of the environment.

The illicit arms trade creates in the greedy and ill-intentioned an aggressive desire for gain which leads to crime, terrorism and threats against the sovereignty of States and the stability of societies. This trade is also a diabolical means for the transfer of money and resources from where they are most needed for development to the accounts of the moguls who conduct such trade.

My country also condemns attempts to transport radicactive and toxic wastes from the North to the South and dump them in the territorial waters of other countries, on the high seas or in the territories of others. We are suffering from such attempts: the waters of the Gulf have been sailed by certain ships carrying toxic waste intended for dumping off certain Gulf ports. But since those attempts have been unsuccessful, the toxic wastes have been dumped on the high seas, and this is a matter of grave concern for the countries of the region since it has increased the pollution of the Gulf, threatening marine life there.

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(Mr. Hassan, United Arab Emirates)

We who suffer the bane of armaments should try to bequeath to future generations a safer home in which they do not suffer as we do. Let outer space in their time be free of the arms race and let it be the common domain of all humanity.

My country reiterates that it is essential to turn as many areas as possible into nuclear-weapon-free zones of peace - in the Indian Ocean, South Asia, Latin America, the South Pacific, the South Atlantic, Africa, Antarctica and the Middle East.

In the Middle East, which the countries of the region are striving to turn into a nuclear-weapon-free zone, Israel has, since the 1950s been working to introduce nuclear weapons into the region, by manufacturing them locally, acquiring them from abroad, or both. To this day, Israel has refused to submit its nuclear facilities to international safeguards and has gone to great lengths in its nuclear co-operation with the racist régime of South Africa.

Through its unremitting effort to assemble, stockpile and manufacture advanced conventional weapons and chemical, biological and nuclear weapons in the service of its expansionist and aggressive designs, Israel has become a huge weapons arsenal that daily practises oppression and terrorism against unarmed Palestinians who are, like so many other peoples, striving to achieve self-determination. In addition, Israel continues to perpetrate acts of aggression against the countries and peoples of the region.

Israel's recent test launching of an intermediate-range missile, which fell in the vicinity of the city of Bengazi, in Libya, is further proof of its determination to develop its nuclear capability in pursuance of its policy of aggression.

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(Mr. Hassan, United Arab Emirates)

Israel is a stumbling-block impeding the progress and development of the peoples of the region. Its armed attack on the Iraqi nuclear reactor provided undeniable proof of its determination to hinder all the attempts of the countries of the Middle East to achieve advancement and development. It is also contributing to the creation and perpetuation of tension in other regions of the world, depriving the peoples of those regions of their right to development by absorbing a great part of their financial resources through its exports of weapons and other means of death and destruction. And it has recently come to light that some of its citizens have helped in the training and organizing of drug trafficking gangs.

We appreciate the ongoing efforts of the United Nations and its bodies in demonstrating the dangers inherent in the arms race and the stockpiling of weapons. We applaud the Organization's unremitting search for means to halt and eliminate the scourge of armament. We call upon the United Nations to intensify those efforts and to seize the opportunity provided by the present propitious international climate to achieve the objectives for which it has been striving for decades.

Mr. MORTENSEN (Denmark): I should like first of all to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of this important Committee. My congratulations also go to the other members of Bureau. We trust that under your leadership this Committee will conduct its business efficiently and with success.

On the first day of our work the representative of France made a statement on behalf of the 12 member States of the European Community. Denmark of course fully endorses the views expressed in Ambassador Morel's statement.

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(Mr. Mortensen, Denmark)

The First Committee has in recent years witnessed an encouraging development towards a more positive, co-operative and non-confrontational atmosphere, which should be beneficial to the work of the Committee. Last year, we saw a higher percentage of consensus resolutions in the First Committee than ever before. That trend should be pursued, as resolutions on disarmament issues will have a greater influence on the disarmament process when they are expressions of a concerted view of the States Members of the United Nations.

The improved atmosphere in the Committee is a reflection of the international situation and in particular of the much improved relations between East and West over the past few years. Recently in Wyoming, the United States and the Soviet Union continued and intensified their dialogue on a wide variety of issues. That positive development seems to have acquired a momentum of its own and has greatly influenced the whole range of East-West relations.

In the arms control and disarmament area, that trend has already produced some promising progress, and the prospects for real breakthroughs seem brighter now than ever before. At their recent high-level meetings, the United States and the Soviet Union have taken new, important steps towards broadening the area of agreement on important arms-control and disarmament issues. In Europe, the Vienna negotiations on conventional forces in Europe have had a good start, and we are optimistic that an agreement on conventional armed forces in Europe can be worked out in the near future.

Disarmament, however, is not the prerogative of the super-Powers or of the European countries. Disarmament and the building of greater confidence and security are needed in all parts of the world and all Member States bear a responsibility. Multilateral disarmament measures are therefore necessary to support and supplement bilateral and regional arms-control and disarmament measures. The United Nations has a special and very important role to play by

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(Mr. Mortensen, Denmark)

continuing the pressure and encouragement with the aim of promoting disarmament world wide. Further progress in disarmament should be pursued in a framework of positive interaction between the multilateral and bilateral dimensions of the negotiating process. In that process, the First Committee has a central position.

The reduction of nuclear arms is an important priority in the disarmament process. My country strongly supports the continued efforts to reduce the reliance on nuclear deterrence. The two super-Powers have made a significant first step with the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles - INF Treaty - and are continuing negotiations on a 50 per cent reduction of their strategic nuclear weapons, which were given new impetus at the meeting in September of the two Foreign Ministers. We hope that the outstanding problems may be solved, so that a new, important milestone on the road to nuclear disarmament may be reached in the near future.

An important element in the field of nuclear-arms control is the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which has made a significant contribution to international stability and security. Strong international support for the NPT régime is essential for building confidence at both the global and the regional level. Adherence to the Treaty should therefore be universal. We welcome recent accessions, but note at the same time that some important countries remain outside the Treaty. We urge all States that have not yet done so to join the NPT, which has the widest adherence of any arms-control agreement.

The Fourth Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, to be held in 1990, is an important occasion, which should serve to strengthen the Treaty further. The Conference takes place against the background of reports of the nuclear ambitions of certain countries in different parts of the world. That is a matter of great concern. All parties to the Treaty should work actively to ensure the successful

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(Mr. Mortensen, Denmark)

outcome of the Review Conference, which will contribute to preserving and enhancing the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world could be an important contribution to non-proliferation and to the disarmament process in general, especially in areas where not all countries have acceded to the non-proliferation Treaty. Such zones must take account of the characteristics of each region, and be based on arrangements freely arrived at between all the States of the regions concerned.

An issue closely related to that of non-proliferation is the conclusion of a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty, which in our view is one of the priority issues on the agenda of the First Committee. Over the years, Denmark has urged and supported efforts aimed at the early conclusion of a treaty banning all nuclear tests, in all environments, by all States, and for all time. While not an end in itself, a comprehensive test-ban treaty would be an important step towards nuclear disarmament, especially by impeding the development of new generations of nuclear weapons, and would enhance the attractiveness of the NPT régime for non-nuclear-weapon States. As a negotiating body attended by all five nuclear-weapon States, the Conference on Disarmament is the forum where multilateral negotiations on the test-ban issue should take place. We regret, however, that the Conference on Disarmament has not yet been able to reach agreement on a mandate for an ad hoc committee on a nuclear-test ban. At the same time, we appreciate the useful work of the Conference on Disarmament's Ad Hoc Group of seismic experts.

We have also taken note of the fact that one third of the parties to the partial test-ban Treaty of 1963 have requested the convening of an amendment conference with a view to transforming that Treaty into a comprehensive test-ban

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(Mr. Mortensen, Denmark)

treaty. My country will of course play its active part in the deliberations at such a conference.

We welcome recent progress in the bilateral step-by-step negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union on nuclear testing, and we hope as a first result to see very soon the ratification of the two bilateral threshold treaties. The intensive talks and negotiations as well as the joint verification experiment have marked a qualitative step forward in expanding the area of agreed verification procedures.

Let me now turn to another subject of great interest to my country: the issue of conventional disarmament. While the possession of nuclear weapons is restricted to a small group of States, conventional arms are present in all parts of the world, and in a large number of countries the conventional arsenals are substantial. The expenditure on conventional armaments and forces absorbs an overwhelming proportion of all military budgets in the world and is a serious economic burden to many countries, diverting resources much needed for development. Conventional disarmament is therefore a problem of a truly global character, and the United Nations has a special and important responsibility to put that issue high on the agenda of its disarmament deliberations. Denmark has over the years taken a number of initiatives to promote discussions on general guidelines and principles for conventional disarmament which could be a positive contribution to regional efforts. We hope that the Disarmament Commission will be able to reach agreement on a substantial report on that issue at its 1990 session.

The question of international arms transfer has always been part of the concept of conventional disarmament, and we welcome General Assembly resolution 43/75 I, which encourages more openness and transparency with regard to arms transfers and also considers the problem of illicit arms trade. We see this as an

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(Mr. Mortensen, Denmark)

important first step in a continued consideration by the United Nations of that very complex and serious issue.

Naval armaments and disarmament have gained attention. The role of naval forces must be examined in an overall military and political context and it should be noted that the principle of undiminished security has a special importance with regard to naval disarmament in consequence of well-known geographical asymmetries. Openness, transparency and objective information are important for naval as well as for other disarmament areas. A deepened international discussion in appropriate multilateral forums, with a view to establishing the necessary preconditions for further development of confidence- and security-building measures and disarmament is called for, in the area of maritime forces as well.

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(Mr. Mortensen, Denmark)

My final remarks concern the question of chemical weapons. Denmark urges the early conclusion in the Conference on Disarmament of a global convention totally banning chemical weapons. This is a common goal of the international community, as was demonstrated by the Paris Conference last January. It was a strong political signal that the necessary political will exists to overcome the remaining hurdles and reach an early agreement on a total ban on chemical weapons. Valuable impetus to the negotiations in Geneva has also been provided recently by the Government-Industry Conference against Chemical Weapons held in Canberra, by the United States-Soviet Union joint statement on chemical weapons with the memorandum of understanding regarding a bilateral verification experiment and data exchange, and by the proposals presented by the two super-Powers to the General Assembly. As a convention on the prohibition and destruction of chemical weapons is one of the highest priorities in the disarmament process it is important that the negotiations should not get lost in technical details but should rather keep the political goal of a global ban in the forefront of attention. We call upon all parties to the negotiations to contribute to an early solution to the remaining issues so that a convention can be concluded in the near future.

In concluding let me refer to the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session, in which it is noted that a quarter of the resolutions adopted each year by the General Assembly address issues of disarmament. This is seen as an indication of the depth and continuity of the Assembly's concern with those issues; it also reflects the consideration that the United Nations should continue to be at the forefront of multilateral efforts in this field. The Secretary-General also makes the point, however, that the number of resolutions and a reiteration of old positions does not meet the demands of new circumstances. We should keep this in mind, and by way of new and constructive

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(Mr. Mortensen, Denmark)

approaches to the problems before us we should all contribute to making the work of the First Committee during this session of the General Assembly meet the demands of the new circumstances.

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from Spanish): Before adjourning the meeting, I should like to remind delegations that Monday, 30 October, is the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions on items 49 to 69 and 151. I would ask delegations to hand their draft resolutions in to the Secretariat as soon as possible for processing, especially those drafts that may have financial implications. This will no doubt facilitate the work of the Committee and will give member States sufficient time for consultations and comments when the draft resolutions are discussed.

The following speakers are on the list for the meeting this afternoon: Indonesia, Norway, Ireland, Costa Rica and Bangladesh.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.

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