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Chairman: Mr. Erdenechuluun (Mongolia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda items 57 to 81 (continued)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

Mrs. Kurokochi (Japan): May I begin by congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the Japanese delegation, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly at its fiftieth session. The tasks before us have particular significance in this year of commemorations, and I wish to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you guide the work of this Committee to a successful conclusion.

The year 1995 is truly a pivotal one. It commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of both the end of the Second World War and the founding of the United Nations. But it also marks the fiftieth anniversary of the use of atomic weapons for the first and — it is hoped — the last time. In this landmark year, we are encouraged by the significant progress achieved in international disarmament efforts.

I am referring in particular, of course, to the decisions made at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) last May to indefinitely extend the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), to strengthen and improve the process for reviewing the NPT, and to adopt the "Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament". Moreover, as a result of intensive effort at the Conference on

Disarmament in Geneva, we can look forward to completing the negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty in 1996.

In view of the progress that has been made this past year, it is all the more regrettable that nuclear testing is still continuing. While we recognize that every country has its own national security to consider, the conducting of nuclear tests — by any country and for any reason — runs counter to the overwhelming desire throughout the international community for an end to such tests. In the belief that the great majority of countries share its view, Japan strongly calls for the immediate cessation of nuclear testing.

In the "Principles and Objectives" adopted last May, it was decided that the negotiations on a comprehensive test-ban treaty should be completed no later than in 1996. Nuclear-weapon States were called upon to exercise utmost restraint pending the Treaty's entry into force. This suggests that there is a consensus in the international community that with the indefinite extension of the NPT, the highest priority should now be placed on a comprehensive test-ban treaty. Japan is encouraged that serious efforts are under way to achieve this goal.

In response to this international desire for a test ban, and on the basis of its own strongly-held views, Japan and other like-minded States will introduce in this Committee a draft resolution calling for the immediate cessation of all nuclear testing. In so doing, it is not our intention to set nuclear-weapon States against non-nuclear-weapon States. Rather, the resolution is meant as a forceful expression of the international will to bring an end to nuclear testing. We believe the adoption of this resolution will strengthen the

environment favourable to the conclusion of a comprehensive test-ban treaty.

As I suggested, the most important issue in the area of nuclear disarmament is the conclusion of a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty. At the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva this year, we saw significant progress in streamlining a rolling text and in the practical examination of a verification mechanism. In addition, France, the United States and the United Kingdom announced important political decisions regarding the scope of the treaty, to make it truly comprehensive. Japan heartily welcomes these decisions, and requests, in the strongest terms, other nuclear-weapon States to agree to the ban on all nuclear-weapon-test explosions or any other nuclear explosion, for whatever purpose.

During the cold war, a world free of nuclear testing was beyond our imagination; now, however, it seems to be within our reach. Japan will work tirelessly for the conclusion of negotiations by the spring of 1996 so that a treaty will enter into force as soon as possible and with a maximum number of States parties. As Foreign Minister Kono indicated in his statement at the General Assembly last month, Japan is ready to host a ceremony for the signing of the treaty.

In that statement, Foreign Minister Kono also expressed the hope that nuclear-weapon States would strive to make further progress in nuclear disarmament. They must not interpret the indefinite extension of the NPT as an authorization for them to possess nuclear weapons for ever. Nuclear-weapon States are accorded a special status under the NPT; as the "Principles and Objectives" make clear, they have an obligation to pursue with determination the reduction and, ultimately, the elimination of those weapons.

I would like to take this opportunity to stress once again that nuclear-weapon States have a responsibility to respond in a positive way to the trust placed in them by States that do not have such weapons. In fact, by supporting the indefinite extension of the NPT, non-nuclear States committed themselves for ever to non-possession of nuclear weapons, with the expectation that those States that have such weapons will make progress in nuclear disarmament.

Japan believes that it is important for each nuclear-weapon State to do its utmost for the actual reduction of nuclear weapons. In particular, it strongly hopes that the United States and Russia will ratify START II and work for further reductions. For its part, Japan is engaged in various joint measures, including cooperation with the United States

on the construction of a facility for storing nuclear materials derived from the dismantling of nuclear weapons in countries of the former Soviet Union. In this context, we certainly welcome the efforts that are being made by the European Union.

Japan's position on nuclear disarmament is clear: we must strive for the ultimate goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons. While we fully recognize that military force, including nuclear weapons, still plays an important role in maintaining international peace, we nevertheless believe that our goal must be a nuclear-free world. This should be achieved through concrete measures to ensure nuclear non-proliferation, to reduce existing nuclear stockpiles, and to prevent qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons.

Resolutions calling for nuclear disarmament should not be empty rhetoric; they must be put into action through realistic measures that will lead to actual nuclear disarmament. It was in accordance with this view that, last year, Japan introduced at the First Committee a draft resolution aimed at achieving the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons. The draft resolution was adopted with overwhelming support. This year we will propose a follow-up resolution, taking into account the developments that have been made since last year. I expect that it will gain the support of all States, including nuclear-weapon States.

In his statement at the United Nations conference on disarmament held in Nagasaki this past June, Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama stated that we have entered the "era of action in disarmament". It is incumbent upon each country to consider how it can contribute to this "era of action in disarmament" so as to foster a peaceful and secure international environment. Acknowledging this new era, and looking ahead to the preparations for the next NPT Review Conference, which will begin in 1997, Japan is now engaged in devising an effective formula for convening a seminar some time next year on nuclear disarmament in the light of the extension of the NPT. We hope that this seminar will make a genuine contribution to the future NPT review process. I wish to emphasize on this occasion the importance of strengthening the United Nations role to ensure that it functions more effectively and that the various efforts of the United Nations result in practical achievements.

Having commented on the progress made this past year, I would be remiss if I did not also note that the Conference on Disarmament failed to commence negotiations on a convention banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear

explosive devices. This is a great disappointment, particularly since an agreement was reached to establish an ad hoc committee on this issue last March. I strongly hope that negotiations on a cut-off treaty will begin without further delay so that we can advance one more step along the path to nuclear disarmament.

Now let me touch upon issues relating to other weapons of mass destruction: biological and chemical weapons. Japan is deeply gratified that, following the agreement reached at the biological weapons Convention Special Conference in September 1994, the Ad Hoc Committee in Geneva was able to begin substantive negotiations this past July. I look forward to achieving our goal of formulating a legal framework to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention prior to the Review Conference scheduled for late in 1996.

As for chemical weapons, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, which was opened for signature in January 1993, is a monumental disarmament treaty aimed at the complete elimination of all chemical weapons. However, because many countries have yet to ratify it, the Convention has not yet entered into force. Japan deposited its instrument of ratification on 15 September this year, becoming the thirty-eighth State party to the Treaty. It will continue to participate actively in the preparatory work undertaken at The Hague and would like once again to urge those States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty at the earliest possible date.

While the importance of addressing issues relating to weapons of mass destruction cannot be emphasized too strongly, we must not overlook the problem of conventional weapons, particularly when we consider that these weapons are actually being used in regional conflicts. As Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali has pointed out, the control of anti-personnel land-mines and small arms, such as automatic rifles, is a matter of great urgency, inasmuch as they are causing thousands of casualties, including civilian casualties, in various conflicts around the world.

In this context, we warmly welcome the adoption of the Protocol on blinding laser weapons at the Review Conference of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects, which recessed on 13 October. While we are deeply disappointed that the negotiations on the amendment of the Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other

Devices were not concluded at this past session, we strongly hope that a consensus will emerge on strengthening the Protocol at the resumed session in April and May 1996. In the meantime, I call upon all States that have not done so already to accede to the Convention.

Another problem in the area of conventional weapons is the excessive accumulation of small arms. Although it is an aggravating factor in regional conflicts, no particular measures have yet been taken to combat this problem. Japan therefore intends to propose a draft resolution requesting the Secretary-General to establish a group of experts for the primary purpose of examining ways and means of preventing and reducing the accumulation and circulation of small arms. I hope that as many States as possible will support the draft resolution so that we can begin seriously to address this vexing problem.

The promotion of transparency in armaments is also an important task in the area of conventional weapons. In an effort to enhance transparency in transfers of conventional arms, Japan will continue to work to gain the participation of additional States in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and to expand and develop the system. We welcome regional efforts in this area and note, in particular, those made at the Regional Forum of the Association of South-East Asian Nations this year.

United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament are playing a valuable role in efforts to increase transparency in conventional weapons and promote regional arms control. We therefore regret that the Secretary-General's report on the Centres recommends the closing of all three Centres because of the financial difficulties of the United Nations. I should like, however, to call attention to the Kathmandu Centre in Nepal, which is making significant contributions to regional peace and disarmament. Japan has been extending considerable assistance to its activities, which constitute the so-called Kathmandu process, and strongly hopes that it will be possible to allow at least this Centre to continue.

In this important year, when international awareness of disarmament issues is perhaps greater than ever before, I cannot but feel confident that the First Committee will make significant progress in arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. Japan pledges to do its part to ensure that the efforts of this Committee will be successful.

Mr. Türk (Slovenia): I should like, first of all, to extend to you, Sir, and to the members of the Bureau our warm congratulations on your election. I am confident that,

with your experience and expertise, you will successfully guide the important deliberations of the First Committee and I pledge the full support of our delegation in this context.

Allow me also to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation of the dedicated work of your predecessor, Ambassador Valencia Rodríguez of Ecuador.

Disarmament and international security matters continue to be the subject of particular attention for my delegation. Disarmament and arms-control issues play an essential role in strengthening international security. While progress has been made on various aspects of the prevention and resolution of conflicts, there remains a substantial gap between the security requirements of the present world and existing international arrangements, which are mainly inherited from another and different era. One may say that the new realities have still not been matched by appropriate and adequate security structures and mechanisms.

In order to narrow and ultimately eliminate this gap, the existing mechanisms have to be further adapted and new ones developed. After several years, it is now clear that the pace of this adaptation and development ought to be accelerated. Among other organs, the General Assembly of the United Nations, particularly its First Committee, has a vital role to play in this process.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations manifested early and persuasively his understanding of the new challenges and the need to address them in the context of a new, integrated international security system. His reports "An Agenda for Peace" and "New Dimensions of Arms Regulation and Disarmament in the Post-Cold-War Era", as well as the most recent Supplement to "An Agenda for Peace", represent a useful assessment of the new tasks and the tools for their fulfilment.

It was encouraging to see the debate on these issues intensifying within the General Assembly Working Group on "An Agenda for Peace" and its sub-groups. It would be worth considering the possibility of introducing the relevant topics developed in that context into the work of the First Committee, especially under its agenda item "Maintenance of international security". It is our feeling that, lately, the deliberations of the Committee on this item have been substantially below its potential and powers. This is certainly not a satisfactory situation. It is for this reason that, in our view, it would be appropriate for the Committee to address some of the specific issues raised in the documents I mentioned earlier, preferably taking into account the results that will have emerged from the

discussion within the Working Group on "An Agenda for Peace", its sub-groups and other relevant organs. Preventive diplomacy is one of these topics which, we believe, especially deserves to have its place in the Committee's deliberations concerning the maintenance of international security.

The progress made in the disarmament field was highlighted this year with the successful conclusion of the Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Slovenia, like many other countries, welcomes the outcome of the NPT Conference and commends its President, Ambassador Dhanapala of Sri Lanka, for his remarkable work. The indefinite extension of the Treaty laid solid foundations for genuine nuclear disarmament. The three decisions of the NPT Conference, which have to be treated as a package in its entirety, created the necessary atmosphere of confidence. Regrettably, this positive atmosphere was extremely negatively affected soon after the conclusion of the Conference when one nuclear-weapon Power continued and, later on, another resumed its nuclear testing.

It should be reiterated that, following the indefinite extension of the NPT, the primary responsibility for the effective implementation of the Treaty's provisions lies with the nuclear-weapon Powers themselves. In particular, this includes article VI of the NPT, in conjunction with the Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. If the obligations stipulated in these provisions are not honoured in earnest, the fate of the Treaty, and its desired universality, will be uncertain despite its indefinite extension.

In this connection, we follow closely the progress of the negotiating process concerning the nuclear test ban. We are encouraged by the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban and by the renewed commitment to meet the goal of concluding the comprehensive test-ban treaty by next year. The importance of achieving this goal can not be overestimated.

At the same time, we welcome the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on prohibition of production of fissile material for weapons purposes which, we hope, will lead to the eventual conclusion of the multilateral treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons. Rapid progress on this track would contribute to maintaining the momentum created by the adoption of decisions of the NPT Conference this year.

As these and other disarmament activities are taking place within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, let me at this point comment briefly on the enlargement of the Conference on Disarmament. While the initiatives for the expansion of its membership have finally resulted in an agreement to include 23 more States, it should be noted with regret that, first, the date of this limited expansion remains in the uncertain future and, secondly, the situation of 12 other candidates, including Slovenia, is left unclear. I wish to reiterate our conviction that the enlargement would strengthen the Conference on Disarmament and that the most appropriate solution would be to include all peaceful States Members of the United Nations that have expressed their wish to participate as full-fledged members in the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

One of the most important aspects of disarmament efforts relates to the question of conventional weapons. I wish to note the modest progress made during the Review Conference of the Parties to the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons which was adjourned last Friday in Vienna. Slovenia, as a party to this Convention, welcomes the adoption of a new Protocol IV which prohibits the use of laser weapons designed to cause permanent blindness. Together with numerous other States, we were very disappointed by the Conference's failure to agree on a text of the Protocol related to land mines. We hope that the reconvened Review Conference will accomplish this task by early May 1996 in Geneva.

In parallel, Slovenia will continue actively to support the United States initiative regarding anti-personnel land-mines. Slovenia does not export anti-personnel land-mines and, therefore, already applies in practice the provisions of resolution 49/75 D urging States to declare moratoriums on these exports.

Furthermore, we should not fail to address adequately the question of the continuing operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. It is deplorable that reporting to the Register is still far from being comprehensive and universal. Slovenia maintains that the Register represents an important means for strengthening transparency in the question of armaments and thus contributes effectively to confidence-building on a global scale. Slovenia has already suggested some elements to be considered for the further development of the Register. For example, information on military holdings and on procurement through national production should be elevated to the same level as information on transfers, that is, it should be given the form of two additional categories equal

to the existing ones, namely, exports and imports. Besides, the time has come when it may be necessary to consider various incentives in order to promote and facilitate universal and comprehensive reporting.

Regional security is an integral part of global security. Consequently, sufficient emphasis should continue to be placed on various regional approaches to international security. Situated in the Central European region, Slovenia has been striving to overcome, and to assist in processes to overcome, the precarious security vacuum left after the profound changes that took place in Europe at the end of the 1980s and in the 1990s. We are determined to work further on developing close friendly relations with all our neighbours and our multilateral ambitions have not diminished, in spite of the sometimes unnecessarily slow pace of the expansion and consolidation of different European security arrangements. Slovenia has been an active participant in the Partnership for Peace programme with a view to becoming a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). It will continue its efforts to contribute to the further strengthening of pan-European security mechanisms embodied in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Lastly, Slovenia will continue to support the efforts of the international community and, in particular, those of the parties involved, to bring an end to the armed conflicts in the Balkans.

Let me, in closing, refer briefly to the cooperation between regional arrangements and the United Nations. This cooperation remains essential. It is imperative not to neglect the important work already done by various United Nations bodies in this domain. In this connection, let me mention specifically the guidelines and recommendations for regional approaches to disarmament within the context of global security adopted by the Disarmament Commission and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 48/75 G of 16 December 1993. I wish to emphasize again the practical relevance of such principles as the principle requiring that the regional arrangements have to be freely agreed upon by participating States.

It is of great importance that regional and subregional arrangements be developed on the basis of democratic principles. The essence of such arrangements is in their voluntary nature and in the genuinely shared common interests of the members. In Europe, where a variety of subregional arrangements might emerge, this basic principle remains particularly important.

Finally, the fact that the principle was most clearly formulated in an instrument developed by the United Nations Disarmament Commission illustrates an important point — the relevance of that disarmament body in current circumstances. Here we have an example of what should guide us in our thinking on the future restructuring of the United Nations organs in the field of disarmament.

Mr. Chua (Singapore): I should like, on behalf of my delegation, to express full confidence in you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to your high office. We are certain, given your experience and leadership qualities, that you will serve the Committee with distinction.

The Asia-Pacific region is experiencing an unprecedented period of peace and prosperity. After some of the most disastrous wars of the twentieth century, the guns are now virtually silent. Instead, the Asia-Pacific region has become the most economically dynamic region in the world. The challenge for all Powers, big and small alike, is how to manage change and preserve optimal conditions of peace and stability so as to ensure prospects for continued economic growth.

Crucial to the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region is a stable balance of power among the major players, especially in the triangular relationship of the United States, China and Japan. However, with greater wealth and confidence, countries inevitably restructure their relations with one another. Such restructuring is potentially destabilizing.

This is in the broad security context in which current international disarmament efforts are taking place. We in the Asia-Pacific region generally welcome the progress made towards nuclear non-proliferation, especially the indefinite extension, this year, of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. We also support the positive shift in international disarmament efforts to encompass transparency in the transfer of arms and the non-use of conventional weapons that cause great bodily harm.

However, arms reduction *per se* will not produce conditions for peace, prosperity and growth. There is no simple, causal relationship between disarmament and peace. In fact, the indiscriminate reduction of arms could be destabilizing if it were to impact on the balance between major Powers. For example, if the United States were to withdraw its military forces from the region, that could destabilize the entire region as other countries scrambled to fill the vacuum.

There have been accusations that an arms race is taking place in the Asia-Pacific region. As countries become more prosperous they naturally try to upgrade their defence capabilities. This is not a negative development so long as it strengthens the overall balance of power in the region.

To this end, the Asia-Pacific countries have begun to experiment with a comprehensive approach to security which integrates military, political, economic, social and other aspects. There is no master plan or road-map. A great deal of innovation and ingenuity will be required to ensure that the process enjoys support, given the region's diversity.

One concrete achievement was the establishment in 1992 of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) — a high-level Forum to facilitate open dialogue and consultation between regional and extra-regional Powers on issues of common concern. The aim is to foster a habit of consultation in order to reduce the risk to security and build confidence among participants and, thus, develop a more predictable and constructive pattern of behaviour. The ARF has held three meetings and, as a sign of its growing maturity, has begun to tackle difficult issues such as the South China Sea disputes.

During the Forum's third meeting, which was held in Bandar Seri Begawan in August this year, the Foreign Ministers charted its future direction. They decided that the ARF process was taking place in three stages — the promotion of confidence-building, the development of preventive diplomacy and the elaboration of approaches to the resolution of conflicts. It would move along two tracks — track-one activities to be carried out by Governments, and track-two activities to be implemented by strategic institutes and relevant non-governmental organizations. The ARF process was further institutionalized through the establishment of inter-sessional support groups.

Other, complementary means within the ARF framework are being actively pursued to strengthen the process. During the second ARF meeting, in Bangkok in 1993, the Foreign Ministers agreed to

“endorse the purposes and principles of the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in South-east Asia as a code of conduct governing relations between states and a unique diplomatic instrument for regional confidence-building, preventive diplomacy, and political and security cooperation”.

The principles and purposes of ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation were also endorsed in a consensus

resolution sponsored by more than 130 countries — representing all geographical regions — at the forty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly. Given the strong support demonstrated, ASEAN is now considering means for States that are not members of the Association either to associate themselves with or to accede to the Treaty, as they are entitled to do under its terms.

Confidence-building and preventive-diplomacy measures cannot replace, but must complement and strengthen, existing political and security arrangements. The continued and long-term engagement of the United States remains vital because it has been the strategic anchor for regional stability for the past five decades. This was a point explicitly endorsed by the ASEAN Foreign Ministers during their annual meeting, in July 1995, in Bandar Seri Begawan, when they

“stressed the importance of a stable relationship among major powers ... and expressed the hope that countries in the region would continue to work together to maintain security and stability to ensure rapid economic growth and progress”.

ASEAN has agreed on the importance of maintaining an open and outward-looking orientation towards security. It adopted a Programme of Action for the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN), which has moved away from its initial, exclusionary focus towards emphasis on engaging the major Powers to ensure a stable regional balance of power.

Decades of war and misery have taught the Asia-Pacific countries an important lesson. Through their own bitter experiences, countries have learned that development is the key to peace, prosperity and progress. Development is not an alternative to security but a necessary condition for long-term peace and progress. Also, as countries get richer, there is less propensity for war, or even radical change, because they are committed to promoting prosperity.

Finally, what I have just sketched is a small country's perspective on disarmament and security. You may rest assured, Mr. Chairman, that, within the framework I have elaborated, my delegation and I will extend our fullest support to you in the work of the Committee.

The Chairman: I now call on the Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency of the United States of America, Mr. John Holum.

Mr. Holum (United States of America): The United States pledges its cooperation in the vital work that lies ahead.

I shall deliver an abbreviated version of my written text.

For the international community the way forward in arms control and non-proliferation is clear. We must continue to move away from the divisive ideological and political struggles of the cold-war era and, instead, set our sights on the substantive international security interests of all nations — East or West, South or North, developing or industrialized.

While the international community redoubles efforts to combat nuclear proliferation and terrorism, we must also seek to control all dangerous weapons, including the conventional arms that spread suffering and instability so broadly around the world.

This year the United States will again be calling on all nations to join the moratorium on the export of anti-personnel land-mines. Washington is gratified that more than 20 States have already decided to take this step. Temporary set-backs notwithstanding, we all should be determined to make progress on this grave problem.

This body must press for the earliest possible entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. President Clinton is leading a strong and determined effort for the United States Senate to act promptly on its ratification, along with that of START II. Grim headlines remind all nations that the world needs the Convention now. The United States is heartened that 40 States have now ratified the Convention. My Government is determined to play its proper role in the entry into force and implementation of the Convention.

Earlier this year, in this building, nearly 180 nations united in an international security decision of transcendent importance: working together in new ways, across old dividing lines, to make the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) permanent. That Conference was not a victory for any group of countries, but, rather, a triumph for all nations. All NPT members joined to confirm its contributions in containing the spread of nuclear weapons, fending off the costs and dangers of regional arms races, fostering historic steps towards disarmament and sharing the benefits of the peaceful atom.

Let us remember that the bulk of the support for indefinite extension came from non-aligned countries. The framework for the final result in New York originated largely in South Africa, a nation with special standing thanks to its renunciation of nuclear weapons and its leadership among the non-aligned. The strengthened review process and principles that at once protect the Treaty for all time and keep the spotlight shining bright on the balance of its mission were conceived not in Washington, Moscow or London, but in Pretoria.

Today I want to focus on the part of the Conference decision that clarified the Treaty's animating principles: universality, non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament, nuclear-weapon-free zones, security assurances, safeguards and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In affirming these principles, the Conference confirmed that extension of the Treaty was not an end, but a new beginning.

A central principle, with several parts, is nuclear disarmament.

For decades many States have championed a comprehensive test-ban treaty as the single most important step towards fulfilment of article VI of the NPT. The NPT Conference reaffirmed its singular importance, calling for completion of a comprehensive test-ban treaty no later than 1996.

We welcome the progress made in the Conference on Disarmament towards a comprehensive Treaty. Building on that work, President Clinton is committed to concluding the complete text of the agreement by April, the end of the first part of the 1996 session of the Conference on Disarmament. We would anticipate that the First Committee, at a resumed session, and the General Assembly, at its fiftieth session, would endorse the Treaty so that it could be signed prior to the beginning of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

The time for a comprehensive test-ban treaty is at hand. Advances in science and the end of the cold war have combined to make possible at last what scientists and statesmen have sought for over four decades - but I would remind the Committee that political and geostrategic circumstances are constantly changing. The opportunity we have today may be fleeting. We must seize it, lest delay again jeopardize prospects for the treaty — perhaps for a short time, perhaps for many more years.

Hence, we call on all nations participating in the work of the Conference on Disarmament to accelerate their

efforts to conclude the text of a treaty and to come together on positions that command the support of the international community. The time has come to move to closure on common ground.

It was in that spirit that President Clinton, late in January of this year, withdrew the United States proposal for a 10-year withdrawal right. Furthermore, two months ago President Clinton sent an unmistakable message that the NPT Conference did not lessen, but rather intensified, the United States commitment to a test ban. He called for a true zero-yield comprehensive test-ban treaty with no exceptions, not even for nuclear explosions with yields of only a few pounds. This decision, along with the parallel decisions of France and the United Kingdom, gives a powerful impetus to the negotiations in Geneva, for all nations should be able to embrace a treaty where the word "comprehensive" has its plain meaning: zero nuclear yield, with all countries treated the same.

The comprehensive test-ban treaty will add far more to the security of all States than further nuclear tests, anywhere, by anyone, for any purpose. The world's nuclear arsenals have been more than sufficiently tested. Now it is we who are being tested.

Another measure endorsed specifically at this year's NPT Conference is a ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear explosive devices.

Many nations have long sought such a cut-off. India's Prime Minister Nehru, for example, first called for one in 1954. Two years ago, here at the United Nations, President Clinton strongly endorsed the cut-off, and the General Assembly passed a consensus resolution mandating negotiations. Then, this year, the NPT Conference called for the immediate commencement and early conclusion of negotiations. Still, remarkably, those negotiations have yet to begin.

It is deeply ironic that some of the countries that have historically been the strongest proponents of the cut-off have noticeably lost enthusiasm for it, now that its realization is potentially at hand. A few States may harbour doubts that such an agreement will serve their interests, and so wish to preserve their options. However, they should ponder carefully whether they really want to leave themselves open to a competition that can last for ever and never be won. The history of arms races offers ample proof that the quest for an indefinable "enough" is a fool's errand.

Others have absolutely no intention of doing anything inconsistent with a fissile-material production cut-off. Indeed some have joined in repeated consensus decisions recognizing the value of a cut-off but are tempted by the notion that its negotiation should be linked to other causes, such as yet another nuclear negotiating process in Geneva. That is a formula for paralysis, not progress, and thus for defeating a goal all NPT Parties have endorsed.

Nor should anyone be taken in by the familiar negotiating tactic of making the perfect the enemy of the good. The fissile-material cut-off cannot solve every problem, but it will solve an important one by capping the amount of material for nuclear explosives, not just in the nuclear-weapon States, but also in the parts of the world that can least bear the risks of escalating arms races. Here, too, opportunities lost may never be regained, so let us act accordingly: open negotiations now, honour the expressed will of the NPT Conference, buttress the test ban and make all our people safer.

Another element of disarmament is to counter the overarmament of the cold war. Continued reductions before and since the New York Conference have shown that a permanent NPT advances nuclear disarmament by solidifying the global security environment in which it can proceed.

Nuclear weapons now play a smaller role in United States security strategy than at any time since their inception. Accordingly, in place of the inexorable growth of arsenals in years past, today they are declining at an even faster pace. The United States is continuing to dismantle up to 2000 nuclear weapons a year, the highest rate that technical limitations will permit.

Of course, every path has its twists: START II must still enter into force. But that will indeed happen, because START II is demonstrably in the interests of both Russia and the United States. Meanwhile, as ratification efforts are pressed, both in Washington and in Moscow, START I reductions are running more than two years ahead of schedule.

And we are poised for further progress. The United States and Russia are moving on from limiting delivery vehicles and weapons systems towards more visibly and irreversibly eliminating nuclear warheads. Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin last year instructed their experts to begin consideration of the next steps. As the United States affirmed both before and at this year's Conference on the

Non-Proliferation Treaty, nuclear disarmament remains our ultimate goal.

Since last May the world has gained ground on another principle of the NPT Conference — that of universal adherence to the NPT. Just since this spring, four more States — Chile, Comoros, Vanuatu and the United Arab Emirates — have joined, with more on the way. The number of parties to the NPT is approaching the roster of the United Nations itself. Only nine States remain outside the Treaty.

Progress is continuing also on the NPT Conference principle endorsing nuclear-weapon-free zones as a useful complement to the NPT.

Recent events, including the negotiations on a comprehensive test-ban treaty, have led the United States to move quickly to come to a final decision on the Treaty of Rarotonga. The United States also welcomes the recently concluded Treaty of Pelindaba, which will establish the African nuclear-weapon-free zone. And we hope that a South-East Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone that meets our criteria can be concluded.

Every State in the Middle East has endorsed in principle a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons as well as of other weapons of mass destruction. The United States is, of course, gratified by the noteworthy recent success in the Middle East peace process. We reaffirm once more the importance of the early realization of universal adherence to the NPT.

A long-standing desire for strengthened security assurances has been met this year by declarations issued by each of the five nuclear-weapon States and by the adoption by consensus of Security Council resolution 984 (1995). Those actions were directly responsive to recommendations by non-nuclear-weapon States to harmonize negative security assurances and to make more explicit the role of the Security Council in responding to nuclear aggression against non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT. These measures represent substantial progress in enhancing the credibility of security assurances to such States. The NPT Conference agreed that further steps in this area should be considered.

The effectiveness of the NPT is closely linked with the effectiveness of its safeguards regime, an important principle endorsed and enhanced at this year's NPT Conference. The United States has worked closely with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to strengthen

nuclear safeguards through “Programme 93+2”. Since the Conference, the Agency’s Board of Governors has agreed to implement a number of important recommendations that will substantially enhance its ability to detect undeclared nuclear activities. We urge every State to support these recommendations and we expect to support a second set of additional measures that will be presented at the Board of Governors meeting in December.

The United States will likewise continue strongly to support peaceful uses of nuclear energy under effective international safeguards. My country has actively sought out opportunities for peaceful nuclear cooperation; for example, through sister laboratory arrangements with Egypt, Morocco, Kenya, Ghana, Malaysia, Thailand, Peru and Mexico. We recently signed a major agreement to pursue peaceful nuclear cooperation with South Africa. The United States has also consistently been the largest single contributor of extrabudgetary resources to the Agency’s technical assistance programme.

In multilateral diplomacy, real change is hard. The old ways will always have their disciples, so long as memory is more easily summoned than imagination. But the time for real change has come: we must sustain a new dialogue.

The towering success of this year’s NPT Conference shows that nations once thought to be in rival camps can work with one another rather than talk past one another; that steps forward can replace confrontation over rhetorical absolutes; that international security can triumph over the old international “politics as usual”. Indeed, our work together in that most fateful multilateral arms-control conference in history shows that a constructive new dialogue has already begun.

Now we must apply this new way of working to the great challenges we face as we go forward, including negotiating the comprehensive test-ban treaty, and the fissile material cut-off treaty.

The United States considers itself honour-bound to live up to the commitments made and reaffirmed five months ago — but we expect the same of all other countries. Those who trifle with their prior commitments harm more than the NPT regime or a particular negotiation — they damage the very fabric of international security, with their cynicism about the possibilities of the work we do.

The NPT embodies balance and symmetry; non-proliferation and disarmament are both imperative, and all States are called to play their role in the Treaty’s great

hammering force against nuclear weapons. Article VI is not limited to nuclear disarmament, or to the nuclear-weapon States. All States are accountable for their deeds and their words. No State is exempt — or automatically suspect — because it is or is not a nuclear-weapon State, or because it did or did not once represent some bloc or group of countries. Those urging disarmament on others must also practise it themselves. If we heed these lessons, we will take meaningful steps towards achieving the full promise of arms control and disarmament.

Cynics will mock this as counsel to move slowly — but it is in fact counsel to move forward. After all, who here would have dreamed, just a few short years ago, that the United States would be out front, pulling for a comprehensive test-ban? Or that we would be among those most strongly supporting a fissile material cut-off?

The United States invites all countries to join us in the constructive new dialogue of the era following the extension of the NPT. This will propel our efforts today — even as it honours 50 years of United Nations work in disarmament.

If we work together in this way, I know we can build the kind of world that is in all of our deepest interests: a world where fissile material for weapons is never again produced; where nuclear weapons are never again exploded, and can ultimately be eliminated; where nations are esteemed, not for the arms, but for the commitments they keep, to each other and to their own people.

Mr. Camacho Omiste (Bolivia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): First, I should like to convey the congratulations of the delegation of Bolivia to you upon your election to serve as Chairman of the First Committee. We are convinced that under your skilful guidance, the Committee will achieve positive results.

As we commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, it is appropriate to reflect in all of the Committees, on the role of the Organization, and to reaffirm our trust in the validity of the tasks given to this universal forum by the San Francisco Charter.

The barbarity and suffering occasioned by two world wars underscored the urgency of establishing an institution, representing all peoples, which would foster the maintenance of peace and the strengthening of international security. In the visionary understanding of the founding fathers of the United Nations, the aim of saving humanity from the scourge of war is inseparable from the values of human solidarity.

This is why peace among nations is a necessity and is possible only to the extent that relations of cooperation and mutual respect are developed. Friendship among peoples is strengthened when well-being, justice and law become realities. Disarmament and security are also the cornerstones of the United Nations system and the basis for the construction of a better world.

Over the years, many issues in international life have changed, some have remained the same and others have become thornier. It is saddening to note that in recent times, despite the Charter, more than 100 local and regional wars have occurred with their aftermath of death and destruction. At this very time there are conflicts that touch the universal conscience and raise serious questions as to the effectiveness of the current security system. Still, we can feel satisfied that we have avoided the repetition of the use and the threat of the use of nuclear weapons, as we are aware that both questions are the crux of the contemporary policy of power and, indeed, open up to question the validity of the principle of the juridical and sovereign equality of States. We therefore consider it a positive step to adopt, as soon as possible, a binding instrument prohibiting once and for all the testing of nuclear weapons.

We would also like to place emphasis on initiatives in preventive diplomacy capable of linking economic and social tasks with missions that are more properly political or related to international security. As we all know, general and complete disarmament continues to be a postulate. Accordingly, the phenomenon of the arms race continues to cause uncertainty, heightened by the considerable economic and human resources devoted to that end. It is a paradox that each human being contributes, on average, the equivalent of \$2 per year to the maintenance of peace, whereas, at the same time each one must contribute more than \$150 to support military expenditures. The world, and particularly the millions of people who live in extreme poverty, would presumably benefit from a conversion of those resources into contributions to peace and human rights policies.

In the five decades of its existence, the United Nations has dealt with many conflicts and has demonstrated its ability to prepare the right answer for each situation, which has made it possible for it to design a new way of organizing international relations. In this context, it has made a noteworthy contribution to the codification of norms, the scope of which is particularly beneficial.

For much of its life, the United Nations has been influenced by the struggle between antagonistic ideologies

that impact on the full compliance with and achievement of historic objectives. The fiftieth anniversary is being celebrated at a time of profound changes which coincides with the emergence of a new international era, with contradictory signs in which we can see both positive and negative elements.

The end of the cold war has opened a cornucopia of opportunities. The nature of the changes affects the global structure of power as well as the capability of exerting influence in world policies. Peoples seek space in social, political and economic life, which cannot be based on relations of predominance or force. The tasks of international peace and security must be addressed according to the principle of responsibility shared among all States; they cannot be the exclusive prerogative of some.

We acknowledge the magnitude of globalization and interdependence and we must use the wealth and richness of plurality in the democratization of the world system. This Organization is the depository of great, shared hopes which must not be dashed. It is the right time to give substance to the aims and purposes so often cited, and to contribute to the building of a better society.

We need a future of certainty, justice, peace and security for our peoples. This will be possible only if there is respect for international law and general disarmament, which will discourage situations of force and promote the negotiated solution of disputes. To counter the use of force, we will call on the power of reason and dialogue.

In sum, the principles that will bring us closer to this goal are: the sovereign equality of States; universality in commitments and decisions; shared responsibility; impartiality in international mechanisms; respect for diversity; transparency in decision-making systems, and the demilitarization of international relations. These principles should be the cornerstones of a strategy for peace.

Mr. Amorim (Brazil): Allow me to express my satisfaction at seeing you, a dedicated and experienced diplomat, as Chairman of the First Committee. You can count on our support.

This fiftieth session constitutes an ideal opportunity for all Members of the United Nations to renew their commitment to the purposes, principles and norms of the Charter. It is also a time for assessment and evaluation.

The First Committee, which is the main organ of the General Assembly dealing with disarmament and international security, must take part in the process of reform in which we are all engaged. It is our duty to ensure that the General Assembly shall be in a position to play its important role in matters pertaining to disarmament and to the maintenance of international peace and security, in accordance with Article 11 of the Charter.

The First Committee may create the necessary conditions for a more fruitful dialogue between the General Assembly and the Security Council. It also has the responsibility to provide political inputs to the Conference on Disarmament. It constitutes the most important forum available to the international community as a whole in which to pronounce itself on a wide range of matters affecting international security, such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear disarmament, illicit arms trafficking and transparency in armaments.

For some time now, and especially since the adoption of resolution 48/87, the First Committee has been making efforts to rationalize and improve the effectiveness of its work. Of particular significance, in our opinion, is the organization of agenda items around thematic clusters and the adoption of a phased approach.

Yet, as is frequently said, the mechanisms of the United Nations can only be as good as its Member States allow them to be. The next steps in the process of revitalization of the First Committee should involve greater political will on the part of all States to engage in a constructive dialogue and to respond to the concerns of the international community. The mechanical reiteration of pre-set positions, which impeded any result in two of the three Working Groups at this year's session of the Disarmament Commission, could undermine all efforts towards reform.

On the positive side, we must recognize that the post-cold-war era has already produced a crop of meaningful resolutions coming from the First Committee. Allow me to recall just a few: the unanimous calls for a comprehensive

test-ban treaty and for a fissile materials cut-off treaty; the endorsement of the Chemical Weapons Convention; the establishment of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms; the request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons; the land-mine initiative; the denuclearization of the South Atlantic; and the resolutions on the role of science and technology in international security.

The First Committee should build upon these achievements. It could, for instance, prepare the ground for the resumption of the dialogue between developed and developing countries on the question of international transfers of advanced technologies. The international community will have to address this issue in the future with a view to securing the complementary objectives of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and access to advanced technology for peaceful purposes.

This year's session of the First Committee is marked by two anniversaries. As we celebrate the founding of the United Nations, we are also reminded of the fiftieth anniversary of the introduction of nuclear weapons and the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The memory of that fateful event has helped to renew the commitment of international public opinion to the cause of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, which was the goal of the very first resolution of the General Assembly.

The work of the First Committee during the fiftieth session will be influenced by two important events that seem to push us in opposite directions. The first was the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which was presented to the international community as the basis upon which further accomplishments in nuclear disarmament would be built. The second, however, rekindled memories of the worst years of the cold war and flouted the feelings of public opinion. I am referring to the continuation or resumption of nuclear testing by two nuclear Powers.

For the past months, we have listened with great attention to the explanations presented with competence and professionalism by representatives of these two nuclear-weapon States. I am bound to state our disagreement with the arguments presented. We will therefore support the adoption of a General Assembly resolution on this matter, as was decided in the joint meeting of the States Parties to the Tlatelolco and Rarotonga Treaties on 21 and 22 September.

The only way to leave this regrettable situation behind us is to move forward decisively and to conclude a comprehensive test-ban treaty as soon as possible and no later than the middle of 1996. In this connection, recognition should be given to the positive contribution of the decision by President Clinton of the United States, on 11 August 1995, to pursue a true zero-yield comprehensive test-ban treaty. We were also encouraged by similar statements from other nuclear Powers.

Brazil calls upon all States to express their support for the "Australian formula" for the scope of the comprehensive test-ban treaty, to accept adequate norms for on-site inspections and to support the early conclusion of the treaty. Let me add that a comprehensive test ban would be a contradiction in terms if it did not forbid absolutely all nuclear tests. We deem the prohibition of any nuclear-weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion to be clear enough to encompass all the activities which we want to forbid.

The historic joint action by the Parties to the Tlatelolco and Rarotonga Treaties, the upcoming establishment of the treaty on the African nuclear-weapon-free zone and the Declaration on the Denuclearization of the South Atlantic prove the convergence of purpose of southern hemisphere countries in the area of non-proliferation and disarmament. It is now realistic to envisage the whole southern hemisphere as a zone free of nuclear weapons. We are confident that progress in nuclear disarmament and the formation of new nuclear-weapon-free zones will gradually eliminate the threat of nuclear weapons.

The agenda of the First Committee is vast and sometimes unwieldy. I have addressed a few of its most important items: the rationalization of our work, nuclear testing and zones free of nuclear weapons. We will present our views on the other points in the course of the discussion of each cluster. Members can be assured of the full cooperation of the Brazilian delegation for the good progress of our work.

Mr. Sychou (Belarus) (*interpretation from Russian*): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to associate myself with the congratulations that have been extended here on your election to the responsible and lofty post of Chairman of the First Committee. You may be assured of my delegation's active cooperation.

The year that has elapsed since the General Assembly's last session has been eventful. Much time will be required to determine the subsequent evolution of a number of important trends shaping today's international prospects. Today, the most important factors setting the tempo for laying the foundations of the international system of collective security include the elimination of nuclear weapons, the prevention of the spread of weapons of mass destruction and active steps in the field of microdisarmament, with all the inherent difficulties and vagaries of this process, with which we are so familiar.

Recognizing the importance of synchronizing the process of disarmament with radical political transformations and the changing conditions for ensuring national security, the world has followed intensely the adaptations to the rapidly changing international realities in this area which States of various regions have implemented in their policies. The Republic of Belarus made its contribution to the formation of such policies last year. We are aware of the attention which our partners are devoting to the Republic's disarmament activities and their inherent difficulties. We are therefore attempting to bring our efforts to tangible fruition.

By adhering in 1992 as a non-nuclear-weapon State to the START I Treaty and signing the Lisbon Protocol to it, we established a precedent that was followed by the other States of the Commonwealth of Independent States. As a result, thanks to the efforts of Russia, the United States, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, the entry into force of START I was assured in December 1994.

On 9 February 1995, Belarus ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. In May, Belarus became a sponsor of the decision of the Review and Extension Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to extend the Treaty indefinitely. By having earlier removed tactical nuclear weapons from our territory, we strengthened our moral position in support of a further phased reduction of the world's nuclear arsenals. Thus, in favouring the indefinite extension of the NPT, Belarus believed that this decision was made as part of a "package" which posits a strengthening of the review process of the implementation of the Treaty's provisions, of affirmed principles and the objectives of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

Belarus declared a moratorium, extending from 1 September to the end of 1997, on the export of anti-personnel land-mines. On 15 October 1995, despite a significant appropriation of resources intended for other vitally important sectors of the economy, we resumed the implementation of our obligations under the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE). The temporary suspension which preceded this was understandable given that, during the winter months — when, because of the complex economic situation, there was a shortage of energy even for heating kindergartens, and the factories were working non-stop — the situation was clearly abnormal. By the most recent calculations, work on the reduction in Belarus of armoured transports, in accordance with the CFE Treaty, will require approximately \$230 million. Speaking frankly, in a Republic where as much as 20 per cent of the national budget is and will for the foreseeable future be allocated to overcoming the consequences of the disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear power station, this is an unaffordable luxury.

We hope that our partners sense and understand the specific nature of the problems of reducing weapons in Belarus in the current economic conditions. We would hope that they will also demonstrate due understanding of the fact that this process is by no means automatic. It is, rather, an expression of our political will to create a safer world.

It is perfectly obvious that in such a situation, the planned reduction of military technology received by Belarus as a legacy of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) requires substantial external support. Therefore, it was no accident that Belarus proposed to establish a fund for assistance to States whose economies are experiencing an excessive burden in connection with the elimination of military technology within the framework of the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty. That idea, incidentally, is in keeping with the proposal of the Nobel Prize laureate Oscar Arias Sánchez of Costa Rica regarding the establishment of a global fund for demilitarization, which he made last week at the United Nations.

Having regularly provided to the United Nations, beginning in 1993, information on military expenditures for the past financial year for which such data are available, we are particularly interested in such fields as the ecologically safe destruction of weapons and the conversion of military potential to civilian needs, *inter alia* in favour of the stable economic and social development of States.

We cannot fail to note the negative impact on this process of actions that provoke a recurrence of the bloc

policy, which is particularly dangerous in Europe. We therefore attach the utmost importance to strengthening the role and effectiveness of United Nations activity as a central element in the system of collective security and an effective instrument for the maintenance of international peace and, in Europe, for the enhancement of the role of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

As is well known, the Republic of Belarus is a firm supporter of international initiatives to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones, considering them as an important factor in the strengthening of regional and global military and political stability. We believe we have no right to ignore the danger of attempts to expand the geographical borders of regional blocs, attempts which, as is well known, can and do involve the potential for destabilization. By removing nuclear weapons from our territory, we are reacting with great sensitivity to any possible changes in the geography of the deployment of nuclear weapons.

Nor can we ignore the negative factors in the area of nuclear disarmament, which have been manifest recently in the activities of certain States. Any resumption of nuclear testing threatens to bring about a chain reaction leading to a review by other States of their approaches to the agreed principles of non-proliferation, as well as to their obligations to reject nuclear programmes likely to undermine the adherence of States to other decisions taken by the 1995 NPT Review Conference. The position of Belarus on this question has been stated in the declaration of its Ministry of Foreign Affairs dated 9 September last, distributed as an official document of the current session of the General Assembly (A/50/524). Belarus regards nuclear tests as a step towards the vertical spread of nuclear weapons, which would create a dangerous situation of mutual distrust and suspicion and provoke other nuclear-weapon Powers to embark on that course.

The possibilities for the direct use of the newest achievements of science and technology for the purposes of creating more sophisticated types and systems of weapons, particularly in the nuclear field, where the laboratory simulation of nuclear explosions creates conditions for removing the process of the qualitative enhancement of nuclear weapons from international control, dictates the need to draw up new international agreements covering this area. Thus, in this context, the maximum restraint of nuclear-weapon States towards nuclear testing is a matter of prime significance, and an indispensable condition for the speedy conclusion — no later than autumn 1996 — of work on the comprehensive test-ban treaty. This must include

commitments regarding a complete ban on nuclear testing by all States, in all environments and in perpetuity. Our unequivocal support also goes to the unilateral moratoriums declared and strictly complied with by the United Kingdom, Russia and the United States.

The attitude to the comprehensive test-ban treaty and progress towards nuclear disarmament, and the provision of security guarantees to non-nuclear-weapon States, which has acquired particular significance in the context of the indefinite extension of the NPT, is today attested to by the political adherence of all States to their disarmament obligations. Given its rejection of any real possibility of acquiring nuclear weapons, the interests of assuring the independence and protecting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Belarus create a need for guarantees against the use or threat of use of force, including the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. In this connection, we welcome the adoption by the five nuclear-weapon Powers of unilateral declarations on security guarantees to non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, as well as the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 984 (1995) as important steps towards the drawing up and conclusion of a legally binding international instrument in this field. Belarus favours the speedy adoption of an international instrument covering both positive and negative guarantees to States.

We also fully support the idea of the convening in 1996 in Moscow of a conference on nuclear security.

We would also wish to highlight as a high-priority objective the need for further reductions in nuclear arsenals, the strengthening of the non-proliferation regime in all types of weapons of mass destruction, and the conclusion of a treaty prohibiting the production of fissionable materials for nuclear-weapons purposes that would have a legally binding character.

Belarus is interested in expanding its opportunities to participate in the appropriate negotiating process within the framework of an expanded membership of the Conference on Disarmament. In this context, we support the decision of the Conference on Disarmament regarding the expansion of its membership as soon as possible. At the same time, we cannot fail to express regret that this year again the question of the expansion of the Conference on Disarmament has not been implemented in practical terms.

We also hope that our efforts to agree upon actions within the framework of the convention on stability in Europe, and also our support for the idea of preparing a

treaty on European security will be recognized by our partners. For our part, we are undertaking all possible efforts to consolidate the unique social and political stability of Belarus, considering this as our contribution to the positive evolution of the situation in the subregion.

As reaffirmation of our position on the questions I have mentioned, Belarus has become a sponsor of a number of draft resolutions covering the entire range of disarmament problems. Allow me once again to assure you, Mr. Chairman, of our cooperation and the readiness of my delegation to do all it can to promote the successful conclusion of the work of the First Committee.

The Chairman: The last speaker is the Observer of Switzerland, on whom I now call.

Mr. Desarzens (Switzerland) (*interpretation from French*): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. Your extensive professional experience will guarantee the success of the Committee's work.

I should like to begin with two general comments. First, all the Swiss positions in the area of arms control and disarmament are based on our firm conviction that peace and international security cannot be assured through an arms race. Secondly, disarmament treaties and arms limitation treaties must be balanced, verifiable and universal. For this principle to be respected, these treaties must therefore provide for the security of all States and, at the very least, that of the States parties.

Allow me now to make a few remarks on the events of this year. The Review and Extension Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will be noted as a major event. It allowed States parties to reaffirm, during frank debates and through a resolution, the principles and objectives of non-proliferation and of nuclear disarmament, as well as the important role this Treaty plays in the control of nuclear weapons.

In order to ensure a strong non-proliferation regime, Switzerland has associated itself with the desire of the majority of States parties to extend the NPT for an indefinite period. Our vote, however, is accompanied by the firm expectation that the nuclear-weapon Powers will fully honour all their promises concerning article VI of the Treaty.

It is in this context that the Federal Council regrets the recent resumption of nuclear tests by two Powers of this type, entailing the risk of serious delay in the global efforts at non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament and causing major disappointment for all the non-nuclear States which agreed to indefinite extension of the NPT in the expectation that the nuclear-weapon States would demonstrate the greatest restraint until the conclusion of a treaty on a complete ban on tests.

Nevertheless, Switzerland greatly hopes that the Conference on Disarmament will successfully conclude its negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty as quickly as possible and that until then all the nuclear Powers will respect a moratorium on tests.

Cessation of the production of fissionable materials for explosive purposes is another subject of concern for the Conference at the present time. We welcome the establishment of an *ad hoc* committee with a mandate to negotiate a non-discriminatory multilateral treaty that is internationally and effectively verifiable to ban the production of fissionable materials for explosive purposes. We regret that the Conference on Disarmament was unable to choose a chairman for that special committee — the prelude to real negotiations on the subject during this year's session. Blocking the nomination of a chairman for this Committee is tantamount to preventing negotiations on a specific nuclear-disarmament measure, and it sends a wrong signal.

The decision of 21 September to adopt the report submitted in 1993 by Ambassador Paul O'Sullivan and recommendations in that report regarding the membership of the Conference on Disarmament are a first step towards raising that body to the level of a universal forum. This decision will serve as the basis on which the Conference on Disarmament will be able henceforth to assume the full significance that is its right. We earnestly hope that this principled decision will be rapidly followed by specific action. Indeed, that would enable candidates for adherence to enjoy all the rights and assume all the obligations of member States at the earliest possible time.

We sincerely hope that the Biological Weapons Convention will be supplemented with an instrument for effective verification. This is why Switzerland, from the very outset, has participated in the discussions to that end. We realize that, for technical reasons linked to the nature of biological agents, complete and reliable verification is hardly possible in that field, and we therefore support measures that put the emphasis on strengthening and

improving respect for that Convention. It goes without saying that such measures must be legally binding, must provide for challenge inspections and must not unduly hamper the activities of civilian industry or scientific research. We hope to see the Biological Weapons Convention supplemented by such a regime in the near future.

According to the initial estimates of signatory States, the Chemical Weapons Convention should have entered into force by the beginning of this year. However, the volume of the preparatory work for its implementation was clearly underestimated, and the ratification process therefore got off to a rather slow start. On 10 March Switzerland became the twenty-seventh State to ratify that Convention — the main instrument for checking the proliferation of chemical weapons. We note with satisfaction that the rate of ratifications has speeded up during recent weeks and that the Convention's entry into force next year still seems possible. It seems to us that if that is to happen it is crucial that the two States which possess the most significant chemical arsenals, and which have played an extremely important role in the conclusion of this Convention, should complete their national ratification procedures as quickly as possible.

The rediscovery of what could be called "micro-disarmament" is one of the new phenomena of the past few years. This is a consequence of the re-emergence of conventional wars in the third world outside of Europe, with all that is entailed by these vile and unbearable fratricidal conflicts and the means that they use. The Review Conference of the State Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons, which has just concluded in Vienna, provided for the adoption of a new protocol relating to blinding laser weapons. Although this Protocol does not completely ban the use of lasers directed against the human eye, its adoption is an important marker for the future.

On the other hand, Switzerland deplores the failure of the negotiations concerning the improvement of Protocol II, which relates to land-mines. The progress that is essential in this area — extension of the field of application to internal conflicts; the detectability of mines; self-destruct machinery; effective restrictions on transfers; and verification machinery — was not achieved despite considerable efforts. It is therefore essential that in the months to come Governments reconsider their positions with a view to opening the way to agreement during the next stage of the Review Conference. Otherwise, efforts to

control the problem of mines will come to naught once and for all.

The Chairman: I appeal to all representatives to be here at the time scheduled so that meetings can begin

promptly. I would also ask delegations to dispense with the customary congratulatory remarks. Naturally, I shall assume that the kind sentiments are implied.

The meeting rose at noon.