



# General Assembly

Fifty-first session

## First Committee

9<sup>th</sup> Meeting

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New York

Official Records

*Chairman:* Mr. Sychou . . . . . (Belarus)

*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

### Proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001

**The Chairman:** As I informed the Committee at our organizational meeting held on Thursday, 10 October, I have received a letter dated 26 September 1996 from the Chairman of the Fifth Committee concerning the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, as set out in document A/51/6 (Prog. 1).

The Officers of the Committee, after appropriate consultations, have decided to convene this special meeting today in order to enable the Committee to consider disarmament issues under Programme 1 (Political Affairs) of the medium-term plan and to provide an opportunity for delegations to express their comments and views on the subject matter in order to transmit them to the Fifth Committee.

I now open the floor for comments.

**Mr. Rivero Rosario** (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation welcomes the punctuality of our meetings but it seems that not everyone is accustomed to this. I would like to say that the Non-Aligned Movement has approved a statement on behalf of all its membership. I think that our colleague from Indonesia has arrived to present the statement, and so I would prefer to speak after that country's delegation.

**Mr. Parnohadiningrat** (Indonesia): My delegation is grateful to have the opportunity to speak. However, my Ambassador will deliver this statement and he is not yet

present. Perhaps there is another delegation that wishes to speak now, as we will be speaking later on.

**Mr. Goosen** (South Africa): In order to move the process along, if you would permit me, Sir, I wish to make our statement in support of the statement to be made by the Ambassador of Indonesia on behalf of the Countries of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and other developing countries.

We would like first to express our appreciation to the Colombian delegation, which holds the chair of the Non-Aligned Movement, and the Indonesian delegation, which has coordinated the Movement's preparation of its joint position for the debate on subprogramme 1.3 (Disarmament) of the Committee for Programme and Coordination's report.

Recent years have seen many accomplishments in the area of disarmament. On the multilateral and global level, these have included the conclusion and now imminent entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction; the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the adoption by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference of the decisions for a strengthened review process and the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament; the work being done by the States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC) to strengthen the BWC by establishing a verifiable compliance regime; and the

strengthening of the network of nuclear-weapon-free zones with the recent conclusion of the Pelindaba Treaty and the Bangkok Treaty, which have had the effect of extending nuclear-weapon-free zones to cover the entire southern hemisphere. These initiatives are a clear demonstration of the continued commitment of non-nuclear-weapon States to the goal of ridding the world of nuclear weapons.

Among further accomplishments are the conclusion and signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the support for which has been demonstrated by the overwhelming majority by which it was adopted in the General Assembly and by the large number of States signatories which it has attracted; the recent advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons; the agreement reached on guidelines for international arms transfers at the 1996 session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission; and lastly, the successful conclusion of the 1996 Review Conference of States Parties to 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 with the adoption of amended Protocol II on landmines and the addition of the new Protocol IV on blinding laser weapons.

There is also much thought being given to the future. While we have seen significant progress in recent years in the area of disarmament, many important and significant tasks remain ahead of us. Here it is worthwhile to mention what has been and is being done: firstly, work on a future agenda for nuclear disarmament — which for us remains the primary focus in disarmament — through, for example, the report of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons and the programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons; secondly, the work on a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons; thirdly, work by the ad hoc group established by the States parties to the BWC; fourthly, under United Nations General Assembly resolution 50/70 B on small arms, work by the panel of governmental experts on small arms; and lastly, activities to give the necessary international focus to the devastation being created by anti-personnel landmines. Here a major initiative was taken in the recent Ottawa Declaration, which committed 48 Governments to work together to ensure the earliest possible conclusion of a legally binding international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines.

One of the main objectives of the subprogramme on disarmament is to monitor and assist current and future

trends in the field of disarmament and international security, *inter alia*, to address post-disarmament problems, including the economic and social consequences of disarmament. In this regard the NAM statement accurately reflects the priorities given to weapons of mass destruction, where the main priority continues to be the ultimate and complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

My delegation is particularly pleased that the NAM statement on the subprogramme has accorded conventional disarmament an appropriate priority. As President Nelson Mandela and Foreign Minister Alfred Nzo have recently emphasized, conventional weapons are the cause of most of the death and suffering in conflicts around the world today. It is thus important that greater emphasis should be placed on conventional armaments in all disarmament forums, with specific reference to the proliferation of small arms.

We agree with the Secretary-General's comments in the "Supplement to An Agenda for Peace" in 1995 that

"Progress since 1992 in the area of weapons of mass destruction and major weapons systems must be followed by parallel progress in conventional arms, particularly with respect to light weapons." (A/50/60, para. 65)

Africa is one of the continents that has suffered the most as a result of the proliferation of light weapons, as well as the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. These weapons have had a devastating effect on civil society after conflicts have ended and have placed severe constraints on reconstruction and development, particularly in rural areas. The scale of the problem is well-known, and the challenge it poses is significant in a continent with limited resources and great developmental needs.

In considering the allocation of resources to disarmament, the United Nations should not only take into account the priority which this necessitates and the high emphasis given to it by the entire international community; it should also be focused on the work that is already being done and still needs to be done by the international community on the future agenda to eliminate all weapons of mass destruction and to halt the proliferation of conventional weapons beyond the legitimate requirements of self-defence.

*Mr. Mernier (Belgium), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

**The Acting Chairman** (*interpretation from French*): I would be grateful to the representative of South Africa if he would submit his written text to the Secretariat.

**Mr. Rivero Rosario** (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): First and foremost, my delegation wishes to give its full support to the statement to be made by the Indonesian delegation on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM), with which we entirely concur. The Cuban delegation is pleased that our Committee is giving some time on its heavily charged agenda to take up an item to which we attach the greatest importance.

On previous occasions, and despite the requests of some delegations, the analysis of the proposed medium-term plan and the corresponding programme on disarmament were not considered in our Committee, and our role was limited merely to transmitting the views of some delegations to the body that considers and adopts the proposed medium-term plan.

We are convinced that no delegation present here can ignore the great importance of what we are called upon to consider, because it is nothing more or less than the programmatic basis for the path to be taken by the Organization, from 1998 to 2001, in the field of disarmament. The many efforts and valuable initiatives that we are discussing in our Committee could remain in a vacuum if we merely put them in resolutions and if the ideas contained therein are not subsequently incorporated in the Organization's programme and are not given proper backing when the budget is discussed. This is why the discussion and analysis of the various programmes by the relevant intergovernmental bodies is essential.

We note with deep concern the reluctance of some delegations at the time this situation arose and it was indicated that the analysis should be carried out in the Fifth Committee. In this respect, my delegation would like to indicate that the rules governing programme planning prevent the analysis of the proposed medium-term plan by the relevant intergovernmental bodies, taking into account the fact that they have the necessary knowledge and experience in the areas they deal with, in addition to having a comprehensive view of what the priorities should be in every given area — in our case, disarmament.

So what we are doing today is merely performing our duty. My delegation regrets that the Committee has not received a proper briefing as to its responsibility in this connection, which has stopped us from providing the necessary time in our work schedule to conduct a serious

and painstaking analysis of the programme that concerns our Committee.

With regard to the methodological aspects, the necessary transparency should also be imparted to the issue. My delegation considers that another aspect that should be improved in future and which would enhance the knowledge of all delegates on this matter is that all the documents relating to this subject should be distributed in our Committee.

Insofar as the substantive aspects are concerned, we wish to dwell on a few of these elements, including, for example, the format of the subprogramme. We strongly believe that, as in the 1994-1998 medium-term programme, disarmament matters should be reflected in a separate programme, and not, as is now being proposed, limited to a subprogramme. There is no need to repeat here the many tasks that we all agree the Organization must carry out in this connection. This is also reflected, whether or not delegations' positions coincide, in the large number of draft resolutions presented and adopted every year, which, as we know, have shown a definite increase in the last three years.

The proposed medium-term plan, as will be indicated in the NAM statement, must faithfully reflect the mandates approved by Member States through adopted decisions. It must also strike the sensitive balance that emerges from all, and not merely some, of our important decisions. The proposed medium-term plan cannot become a vehicle for trying to approve and implement ideas and concepts that Member States have neither considered or approved. There may be stereotyped sentences composed at some illustrious desk or fashionable concepts that have been aired in some corners of the planet, but here we are not in a publishing house or show room. Rather, we are under the roof of an Organization that belongs to us all, in which all of us have a voice and a vote. In accordance with the rules of procedure that we have adopted, it is only our decisions that can, and should, constitute the mandate to be implemented. There are objectives and goals that the international community set for itself long ago, and although many insist that the cold war has ended, those goals have still not been achieved and, indeed, seem further from us every day.

The prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons is a clear example of that. However, the proper plan fails to call for the establishment of a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons and a programme to eliminate them by an agreed deadline. Much remains to be done to achieve the goal of general and comprehensive disarmament. The majority decision of this Committee in

support of nuclear disarmament, the important advisory opinion rendered by the International Court of Justice and the programme of action to eliminate nuclear weapons in an agreed time-frame are undoubtedly areas in which the United Nations should play an important role in coming years.

With regard to weapons of mass destruction, as the Committee will remember, after enormous and strenuous efforts in negotiations, our countries agreed on a Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. However, as we all know, it has still not been ratified by the two major chemical weapon States and the Convention is about to come into effect. This is another area that deserves more attention in the proposed medium-term plan.

In the light of the aforesaid, it is very hard to understand why there is excessive coverage, for example, of the question of conventional disarmament. There is, *inter alia*, a reference to maintaining the Register of Conventional Arms, including the addition of possible regional variants. It would appear that the principle agreed here, that regional measures should be reached on the initiative of the States in the region concerned and with their full agreement and participation, is no longer valid and that now, without any relevant resolution, the Organization — the Secretariat, that is — is nevertheless imposing such agreements or regional registers.

A final example of where there should also be changes in the proposed plan relates to training in and advisory services relating to disarmament. The Secretary-General has been running an annual scholarship programme to help all Member States, particularly developing countries. This has helped to increase the professional skills of Members of this Organization in this field. However, it seems that if there are moves to silence or eliminate the programme in coming years, they are not mentioned in the text. This is why my delegation believes that the proposed subprogramme 1.3 on disarmament should be redrafted in the light of the considerations that have been aired during this debate and then referred to the body responsible for its final consideration and approval once the proposed plan has been amended. These are some of the points that we wish to put forward on this matter, and we hope that they will be duly taken into account.

**The Acting Chairman** (*interpretation from French*): I would ask the representative of Cuba, and all other

speakers, to pass the texts of their statements to the Secretariat.

**Mr. Wibisono** (Indonesia): In his letter to the Chairman of the First Committee dated 26 September 1996, the Chairman of the Fifth Committee made a request that the First Committee conduct a review of subprogramme 1.3 of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 (A/51/6 (Prog. 1)), with a view to communicating its views to the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly. In that regard the Indonesian delegation, in its capacity as Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Working Group on Disarmament, has the privilege to deliver a statement on behalf of States members of the Non-Aligned Movement and other developing countries concerning the subprogramme. Those States have also requested the Secretariat to circulate the statement as an official document of the fifty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly. The statement reads as follows:

“1. In the view of the Non-Aligned Movement, subprogramme 1.3 on disarmament should be treated as a separate and distinct programme in the overall medium-term plan. It is important that the programme reflect the general thrust of numerous resolutions on various disarmament issues adopted by the United Nations General Assembly prior to its formulation. Of equal importance is the fact that it should indicate the viewpoint of an overwhelming majority of Member States. The Non-Aligned Movement therefore calls for a reassessment of the approaches contained in the programme and a conscious adjustment of the issues involved in order more accurately to reflect the viewpoints and positions of the Non-Aligned Movement which constitutes a majority in the Organization.

“2. The programme on disarmament should be guided by the basic premise and framework contained in the Final Document adopted by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD I), for there can be no doubt that the principles and priorities contained therein continue to retain their validity and relevance. There exists, as in many agreements, and recently reiterated by the unanimous decision by the International Court of Justice, the obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. It follows then that the ultimate and complete elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction must be accorded priority. In this context, the programme should also

take into account the need for the Conference on Disarmament to establish, on a priority basis, an ad hoc committee to commence negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament and for the ultimate and complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework.

“3. The future agenda for non-proliferation in all its aspects and nuclear disarmament, for the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), has gained new impetus as a result of the adoption of the principles and objectives as contained in the documents adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the NPT. Despite this recent development and positive changes in international relations over the last few years, nuclear weapons still continue to threaten international security. Nuclear arsenals are being constantly improved for greater accuracy and annihilating capabilities, while new nuclear doctrines are being advanced.

“4. The highest priority for the international community, therefore, should continue to remain the ultimate and complete elimination of nuclear weapons as was laid down in the Final Document of SSOD I. The agenda should also include measures on the elimination of the other weapons of mass destruction, in particular chemical and biological weapons, through the full implementation of relevant disarmament treaties.

“5. The Non-Aligned Movement stresses the urgency of the need to curb the excessive production, development and build-up of conventional armaments, using global and regional approaches agreed freely among the States of the region, taking into account the legitimate requirement of States for self-defence and the specific characteristics of each region. In this connection, it is important that the question of conventional arms control and disarmament should be accorded an appropriate place in the programme.

“6. The new idea to extend the role of disarmament as a tool of preventive diplomacy and peace-building must be approached with caution and circumspection. This is because such an approach may well divert attention from the implementation of agreements already reached in resolving priority issues. Hence, the task of the United Nations would be to formulate programmes of disarmament that impact on the critical

interests of a vast majority of Member States in a balanced manner.”

**Mr. Zaluar** (Brazil): At the outset, I should like to thank the Chairman and other officers of the First Committee for scheduling this meeting, which we requested. We believe that it will provide a very useful opportunity for discussion and that every year it should be an integral part of the programme of work of the First Committee as it examines the disarmament activities of the United Nations. We do not believe that even an entire week of structured discussion would be too much, if it were well-prepared.

Before commenting on programme 1 of the medium-term plan, I want to go back in time a little. The past five years have witnessed great changes in the international system. Old concepts and ideas lost relevance, and it was widely perceived that a new way of thinking was necessary. Our delegation has always been wholeheartedly grateful to the Secretary-General for taking the lead in proposing a new conceptual framework for the new era of international relations, notably in “An Agenda for Peace” of June 1992, in the “new dimensions” report of October 1992 (A/C.1/47/7), and in the Supplement to “An Agenda for Peace”, of January 1995 (A/5/60). However, some conceptual confusion persisted, which was only natural given the wide range of the changes. The General Assembly has worked very hard to address such conceptual problems, most notably in resolutions 47/120 and 47/120 B. It has done a great deal to clarify the issues and lay the ground for the new approaches that the United Nations needs to take in order to face the new reality.

I said that some conceptual misconceptions persisted; I will refer to three, which are of direct relevance to the medium-term plan. The first one — the confusion between peacekeeping and peace enforcement — has already been corrected. I need not dwell on the tragic circumstances that prompted the following words, with which we strongly agree, in the Supplement to “An Agenda for Peace”:

“Peacekeeping and the use of force ... should be seen as alternative techniques and not as adjacent points on a continuum, permitting easy transition from one to the other”. (A/50/60, para. 36)

That issue has already been clarified. However, there are two other conceptual problems that we believe are reflected in the medium-term plan, and that might be addressed in a future revised version.

One of these is the confusion between preventive diplomacy on the one hand and preventive deployment on the other. From our point of view, preventive diplomacy is diplomacy, and preventive deployment is peacekeeping, and there should be no confusion between the two. The result of their confusion was the even more confusing concept of preventive action, which bundles together all sorts of activities, from traditional diplomacy and development activities to peacekeeping. This has sometimes led to an over-ambitious approach. In this time of great strain for the United Nations, both politically and financially, it is important that we keep our minds clearly focused on reality, and ensure that the United Nations concentrates on activities in which it can play a useful role.

The final area of confusion, as we see it, is between post-conflict peace-building and development activities. This has led to the use in the medium-term plan of the term “peace-building” instead of “post-conflict peace-building” — we have asked for this to be corrected — and even to the proposal for a sort of preventive peace-building. The General Assembly is currently considering this issue in discussions on its response to the Supplement to “An Agenda for Peace”, and we hope that these discussions will be reflected in the medium-term plan in future.

I should like to refer to subprogramme 1.3 on disarmament. Paragraph 1.13 of document A/51/6 (Prog. 1) gives the wrong impression of recent developments in the area of disarmament. It basically states that all is well in the nuclear area, but that problems relating to conventional weapons continue to pose a threat to international peace and security. The implication is that all the problems relating to nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction are in the process of being resolved, and should not be the object of action by the United Nations. This directly contradicts several documents. First, it contradicts the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.1/47/7) on new dimensions of arms regulation and disarmament in the post-cold-war era, in, *inter alia*, paragraphs 9, 21, 24 and 27. Secondly, it contradicts the report of the Secretary-General (A/50/60) on a Supplement to “An Agenda for Peace”, which, in paragraph 60, states that disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation continue to be of paramount importance. Thirdly, it contradicts page 3 of the Security Council’s response to the Supplement to “An Agenda for Peace” in document S/PRST/1995/9. Fourthly — referring only to documents of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly — it contradicts resolutions 50/65, 50/66, 50/68, 50/70 C, I, N, P and R, and 50/71 E. Fifthly, it contradicts paragraphs 1079 and 1080 of the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/51/1).

With regard to paragraph 1.15 of the proposed medium-term plan, it is not clear why priority is to be attributed to post-disarmament issues. The implication is that disarmament issues are no longer a priority. It is also unclear why particular attention should be given to possible regional variants of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, which do not exist — indeed, if they did exist, they would have to be maintained in the first place by regional arrangements; any support from the United Nations would first have to be mandated by the General Assembly.

Paragraph 1.16 puts too strong an emphasis on regional disarmament. Regional disarmament is a good thing, and should be pursued, but the role of the United Nations in regional disarmament is necessarily secondary to that of regional mechanisms. We could replace this language by language similar to that in paragraph 15 of the “new dimensions” report, which establishes a more adequate balance between global, regional and subregional efforts.

Finally, paragraphs 1.17 and 1.18 should include specific reference to the continued publication of *The United Nations Disarmament Year Book*, which is especially useful to the delegations of developing countries, and also to the United Nations Disarmament Fellowship Programme, to which the same observation applies. As I said earlier, we look forward to increased consideration by the First Committee of United Nations activities in the area of disarmament, unto a more structured discussion next year and, more generally, to a stricter emphasis in the General Assembly on concrete aspects of the activities of the United Nations.

**Mrs. Arce** (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Mexico concurs with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. Similarly, the delegation of Mexico supports the comments of the representatives of South Africa, Cuba and Brazil.

My Government believes that the six paragraphs of subprogramme 1.3, disarmament, in document A/51/6 (Prog. 1) do not properly reflect international reality in the disarmament sphere in recent years.

This is why we believe it essential that the programme of United Nations disarmament activities for the period 1998-2001 appropriately reflect the mandates established by Member States. On the one hand, we must continue to maintain the subject of disarmament in a separate programme so as to indicate clearly the high priority

Member States attach to such activities. The separate disarmament programme should set forth the priorities in both nuclear and conventional disarmament that have been established through the exchange of views of delegations in this discussion.

**Mr. King** (United States of America): The United States appreciates this opportunity to make some comments on the medium-term plan and its programme 1 dealing with political affairs.

Specifically, the United States finds subprogramme 1.3 of the medium-term plan on disarmament to be a generally good blueprint and mission statement on which the Department of Political Affairs and the Centre for Disarmament Affairs can base their work for the period 1998-2001.

The United States also wishes to acknowledge the excellent work done by the Secretariat and especially by the Centre for Disarmament Affairs in the disarmament area. Their technical and administrative support of the General Assembly's First Committee, the United Nations Disarmament Commission, the various review conferences and the Conference on Disarmament at Geneva has been commendable.

We were pleased to see that the medium-term plan has recognized that much has been accomplished on the nuclear-disarmament front. We were also pleased to see that the description of subprogramme 1.3 makes specific reference to the need to focus also on conventional-disarmament issues. The United States continues to believe that more progress needs to be made on conventional-disarmament matters and that the international disarmament agenda should reflect a better balance between conventional and nuclear issues.

We listened carefully to the Non-Aligned Movement's statement on subprogramme 1.3 on disarmament and the supporting statements made by various speakers. As we understand it, the Non-Aligned Movement is proposing that a separate programme be established for disarmament in the medium-term plan. Without commenting on questions of substance that that statement and proposal raise, we wonder whether the statement might not reflect some confusion as to the purposes of the medium-term plan.

As the United States understands it, the medium-term plan is meant to be a programmatic tool — a statement of mission, if you will — to guide the Secretariat's work for the medium term. Financial and budgetary decisions

affecting the Secretariat are supposed to be based on this plan. On the other hand, the proposal of the Non-Aligned Movement sounds much more like a suggested political agenda for the international community to follow on disarmament issues and, as such, the United States believes that the Non-Aligned Movement proposal might not be relevant to the medium-term plan.

On the proposal of the Non-Aligned Movement itself, the United States cannot help but be struck by the great contrast between, on the one hand, the unrestrained emphasis it places on nuclear disarmament and, on the other, the passing — almost secondary — reference it makes to the need for conventional disarmament and even the caution it expresses regarding a possible role for disarmament as a tool of preventive diplomacy and peace-building. This marked contrast appears to reflect a misunderstanding of, if not an indifference to, the real causes of conflict in the post-cold-war era and, in our view, unnecessarily confuses, skews and complicates the goal we all share of making the world a safer place. The contrast, in effect, displays once again a preference for — some would say an addiction to — the easy rhetoric of nuclear disarmament rather than for the hard work of improving international security.

The United States believes that the medium-term plan is a financial planning tool rather than a political statement and, therefore, that the First Committee is not the appropriate forum for an in-depth discussion of the medium-term plan nor for proposals to redraft the programme document prepared by the Secretariat. The Fifth Committee is the proper forum for this, as the General Assembly has recognized by its assignment of the medium-term plan to the Fifth Committee. For this reason, the United States recommends that the Chairman's report to the Fifth Committee contain a brief summary of the most important elements that have emerged from this debate along with written comments submitted to the Chair to facilitate the Fifth Committee's consideration of these important questions.

**Mr. O'Rourke** (Ireland): I am grateful for this opportunity to speak briefly on behalf of the States members of the European Union.

The European Union recognizes that priority-setting for the programmes of the United Nations is a very important part of the work of the Organization. In this context, we believe that consideration of agenda item 114, "Programme planning", will take place in the Fifth Committee. In order to ensure that we participate fully in this debate in the Fifth

Committee, from the point of view of our members in the First Committee, and that there will be an effective response, we will act in concert with our colleagues in the Fifth Committee with a view to formulating a European Union position on the various programmes in that Committee.

However, we are happy to participate in this discussion and I am very glad to take careful note of the points that have been made by representatives who have spoken. I would like to make one comment in addition to the comments we have submitted in writing, in response to what I have heard.

The structure of the medium-term plan was authorized by the General Assembly in decision 50/452 of 22 December 1995 — that is, less than a year ago. It corresponds to an agreed format that had been recommended by the Committee for Programme and Coordination to the General Assembly. The European Union accordingly supports programme 1 as drafted by the Secretary-General.

**Mr. Al-Hassan** (Oman) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to associate my delegation with the views expressed earlier by the representatives of Brazil, Cuba, Mexico and Indonesia. We consider the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, and in particular subprogramme 1.3 on disarmament, to be an important document that deserves careful examination and special attention.

We agree with the proposal that regional disarmament initiatives should be accorded special importance. My

delegation would emphasize the importance of the need to establish coordination in the disarmament sphere between the United Nations Secretariat and other relevant bodies and existing regional organizations, and particularly those in our region, including the secretariats of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the League of Arab States.

We consider that the exchange of views on disarmament affairs, especially those related to our region, is a constructive way of using dialogue to explore ways and means of finding appropriate solutions to outstanding problems. With regard to paragraph 1.13, my delegation fully supports the view expressed by the representative of Brazil that the nuclear-disarmament situation is not shown in a realistic and clear fashion. We feel that certain important steps must be taken in order to give some of the global treaties on disarmament a universal character. These steps include reconsidering outstanding proposals, including the proposal to make the Middle East region a nuclear-weapon-free zone. We hope that this will reflect a trend by the Secretariat and the Organization to promote existing regional arrangements and to exchange views on implementing these proposals.

**The Acting Chairman** (*interpretation from French*): Once again, I ask all delegations that have not yet done so to submit their statements, in writing, to the Secretariat.

(*spoke in English*)

It is my intention, with the consent of the Committee, to transmit to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee the texts that I have just requested, containing comments and views on the subject of disarmament as per Programme 1, Political Affairs, of the proposed medium-term plan. Accordingly, I should like to reiterate my request to delegations to submit their texts and comments to the Secretariat for transmittal to the Fifth Committee.

*The meeting rose at 11.05.*