



General Assembly

Sixty-second session

First Committee

14th meeting

Tuesday, 23 October 2007, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

The Chairperson: Mr. Badji (Senegal)

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

Agenda items 88 to 105 (*continued*)

Thematic discussion on item subjects and introduction and consideration of draft resolutions submitted under disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chairperson (*spoke in French*): Today we will take up our thematic debate on conventional weapons. First, we will listen to our speaker on this issue, the Chairman of the Group of Governmental Experts to consider further steps to enhance international cooperation in preventing, combating and eradicating illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons. His statement will be followed by an informal question-and-answer session.

Following that, we will have a panel discussion dedicated to the tenth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. The statements of the panellists will be made in the course of an informal question-and-answer session.

Following those discussions, it is my intention to call on those speakers remaining on the list for the debate on other weapons of mass destruction. I note that the list of delegations wishing to speak on conventional weapons is extremely long, with 41 speakers currently inscribed. I would therefore ask speakers to speak as concisely as possible so that all

delegations can have the opportunity to make their statements.

Moreover, it will important for delegations that wish to speak to use their statements to introduce draft resolutions or decisions that have been submitted to the Secretariat at the same time. That will help us to avoid having multiple statements in the thematic debate as well as for the introduction of drafts. In that connection, I will not make a distinction between thematic statements and introductions of draft resolutions so that we can make optimum use of the time available to us.

I should also like to inform the Committee that, as of this morning, the Secretariat had received 51 draft resolutions or decisions. I would therefore invite delegations that have not yet submitted draft resolutions to strive to work within the rules. We have already gone beyond the deadline to which we all agreed. With respect to draft resolutions, I wish to note above all that we will not reissue drafts for technical reasons. That will be done only when the Secretariat itself has made a technical error in a draft resolution. Only in such circumstances will texts be reissued.

As regards delegations wishing to make changes or corrections to drafts, I invite them to do so from the floor so that such changes will be reflected in the records of our meetings. That is important for the accuracy of our meeting records.

We now turn to conventional weapons. I warmly welcome Mr. Daniël Prins, Chairman of the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts to consider

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further steps to enhance international cooperation in preventing, combating and eradicating illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons, and deputy head of delegation of the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Conference on Disarmament.

I give the floor to Mr. Prins.

Mr. Prins (Netherlands) (Chairman, United Nations Group of Governmental Experts to consider further steps to enhance international cooperation in preventing, combating and eradicating illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons): I will give a short and personal presentation concerning the Group of Governmental Experts on illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons. I will not speak on behalf of the Group, but simply as its Chair. I think that a hand-out of my PowerPoint slides is in the back of the room.

If I may, I will start with a brief quote from Dante Alighieri, an Italian poet and writer who was also a diplomat. He said that the secret of getting things done is to act, and I think, actually, that there is not much of a secret in that quote. It is actually rather obvious, but I have started with it anyway because, within the United Nations context, we often have the reflex to suggest institutional solutions for the problems we face, whereas often we have to act instead. The report of the Group of Governmental Experts is actually very much about the possibilities to act.

The structure of my presentation is as follows. I will very quickly sketch the report's framework and then the results that came out of it. Also, I will make some personal suggestions for follow-up measures — how to actually get the things done that are in the report itself.

The framework of the report is simply that, within the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, there is already a suggestion, first, that States should regulate brokering activities and, secondly, that States could enhance international cooperation on that issue. The report of the Group of Governmental Experts actually focuses on both of those elements from the Programme of Action.

The first element — the regulation of brokering activities — is covered by the report, and I will start now with its results. First, the report comes forward with a definition of what illicit brokering is, a

description of the issue, which includes the so-called closely associated activities, such as transportation and financing. It also includes the concept of extraterritoriality, which in practice we see as being a part of illicit brokering activities because brokers can travel anywhere in the world where regulation is low or non-existent to undertake their illicit activities. That extraterritorial element, which could be included in national legislation, is a very important one and part of what the Group described as the illicit brokering issue.

Secondly, included in the regulation of brokering activities are the optional elements for national legislation to which the Group agreed. They include — and this is not an exhaustive list — definition, registration, record-keeping, licensing, related legislation, jurisdiction, penalties and international cooperation, which the Group advises could all be part of national legislation on the issue of brokering. In that sense, the list of optional elements is designed as a practical guide for lawmakers in all States that helps to define what issues should be covered in illicit brokering legislation when one tries to come up with national legislation on the issue. So this is a practical guide for legislators, to help them get legislation done.

The other element is the enhancement of international cooperation, and I will simply give a selection of the Group's results in that regard. They include operational information exchange between States — which should be developed more than it is now — and information exchange on control systems. Synergies with the World Customs Organization (WCO) and INTERPOL are very important, because both organizations have done extensive work that links them directly with the issue of illicit brokering. Cooperation between States, INTERPOL and the United Nations on activities that violate Security Council arms embargoes is identified as an important issue for further work, as is assistance in capacity-building and the periodic consideration of reporting by States in meetings at the global level. There was consensus in the Group that all those issues, and many others, are important.

I would like to focus on what could be done next. Although I am familiar with the Arab proverb on never giving advice in a crowd, I will nevertheless try to identify some points that States could work on further in the coming months and perhaps years in order to make progress on the issue of illicit brokering so that

international cooperation and national legislation on the issue will be in place.

The national level is key and appears in the Programme of Action itself as a central concept. States remain primarily responsible for getting things done on that issue, and the regional and global levels bring added value to that objective. The Group has focused on existing structures that can be used, rather than coming up with new institutional ideas or instruments because, in the opinion of the Group, the existing structures are rather promising for getting things done on this issue. They can be used, and they should be used better.

First, let me consider national measures that States could undertake, including formulating national needs assessments and integrating those assessments into action plans. National needs should be included in the reports that States draw up on the Programme of Action. States should include a contact point on brokering in their Programme of Action reports, which usually is — in most States, anyway — their Programme of Action contact point. A new contact point specifically on brokering is not necessary. Although some States might choose to do that, it could be the same contact point as for the Programme of Action itself.

It is advisable that States designate a specific section in their report on the Programme of Action to the brokering issue. States should share operational information with other States and with INTERPOL. That is another national measure that can be directly implemented. States should set up national legislation, which the Programme of Action wants us to do anyhow. They can use the optional elements that are part of the report of the Group of Governmental Experts as a tool for that purpose.

States could encourage a regional approach as well. At the regional level, it could be important to bring together regional experts on legislation to discuss regional operational information exchange. The World Customs Organization informed us that it would be good to include its regional offices in regional seminars on small arms and light weapons brokering issues. Such seminars could also be linked to INTERPOL regional conferences. Regions could formulate capacity-building programmes for funding and present those programmes at the biennial meeting of States on the Programme of Action.

At the global level, the clearing house function of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs could be developed further. There could be a better system of contacts between the United Nations, the WCO, INTERPOL and the International Air Transport Association. The organization of United Nations peacekeeping operations could be improved, for instance by identifying designated personnel for monitoring arms embargoes. In the present situation, every single United Nations officer working in a peacekeeping operation has, as part of his or her task, to monitor the arms embargo. There is no one person specifically designated to do that.

It has also become clear that with regard to peacekeeping operations, the evidentiary information from sanctions committees and their investigative panels should be forwarded to the relevant national authorities, and to other investigative panels when relevant. Another global measure is the periodic consideration of national reporting on brokering and the use — I stress this again — of the existing structure of the biennial meeting of States. But we can do that effectively only if the biennial meeting is made more operational.

I have a few more points to make on that subject. The preparations for those biennial meetings of States are very important. They could be prepared regionally, in addition to national preparation. They could have an early deadline for national reporting, which should include a section on needs before the biennial meeting of States. Regional analyses of challenges could be done on the basis of early reporting that is done well in advance of the start of the biennial meeting of States. In that way, the biennial meeting could be organized as a platform where cooperation and assistance are effectively organized. One could also think easily of the biennial meeting making recommendations to the United Nations General Assembly. That would not be revolutionary, but it would be a simple tool to operationalize the work of those meetings. Those recommendations could then be taken up in the Assembly's omnibus resolution on small arms and light weapons. Those are simple tools to make the process of the biennial meetings of States and the Programme of Action a bit more operational.

Sometimes we have to rethink a bit. For that reason I end with a quote from 1943, when the Chairman of IBM said that he thought there was a world market for maybe five computers. I think it is

essential to keep looking ahead and to make an effort to plan for the challenges. I have tried to give the Committee some suggestions in that regard, which States can easily take up if they wish. The illegal trade in small arms and light weapons, including illicit brokering, is a steadily growing problem that needs to be acted upon and that can be acted upon. It is mainly a question of organization, and I would like to keep it at that.

The Chairperson (*spoke in French*): On behalf of all of us, let me thank Mr. Prins for his brilliant presentation. It helps us to get a grasp of the subject in its full complexity and will help us to put together some questions and comments.

Let me suspend this formal meeting so that we can move to an informal meeting of questions and answers.

The meeting was suspended at 10.45 a.m. and resumed at 11 a.m. with Mr. Darwish (Syrian Arab Republic), Vice-Chairperson, in the Chair.

The Acting Chairperson (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my honour and pleasure to be here with the Committee today on behalf of the Chairperson, Paul Badji. I promise that my delegation and I will cooperate with you in order to succeed in our work in this issue, as well as in the work of the First Committee in general.

(spoke in English)

We shall now hold a panel discussion on the tenth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, otherwise known as the Mine Ban Treaty.

The members of the panel are Ambassador Caroline Millar of Australia, President of the Seventh Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention; Mr. Mohammad Haider Reza, Programme Director of the Mine Action Centre in Afghanistan; Mr. Ian Mansfield, Director of Operations at the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining; and Mr. Ken Rutherford, Co-Executive Director of the Landmine Survivors Network.

I first invite Ambassador Millar to make a statement. She will also briefly introduce the other members of the panel. I now give her the floor.

Ms. Millar (Australia): As President of the Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention this past year, may I first express my appreciation to you, Mr. Chairperson, and to Ambassador Badji, for scheduling this important panel discussion on mine action to coincide with the tenth anniversary of the Convention's adoption and opening for signature. The tenth anniversary gives us all an opportunity to reflect on the Convention's achievements, and on progress on mine action more broadly, as well as on the mine action challenges that lie ahead.

The Mine Ban Convention is unique among arms control treaties, both conceptually and in its practical effects. It addresses the human security concerns of anti-personnel landmines in their totality. It bans an entire class of weapons, provides a comprehensive framework for its elimination and includes groundbreaking provisions on victim assistance and international cooperation. That was made possible during the negotiations on the Convention by the close collaboration between States, civil society and international organizations. That partnership remains fundamental to the success of the Convention.

One hundred and fifty-five States have now joined the Convention, with Montenegro, Indonesia, Kuwait and Iraq being its newest members. It has the highest membership of any conventional arms treaty. In the past 10 years, massive mine clearance efforts have taken place, even in the most heavily mined States. Huge stocks have been destroyed, and the numbers of new victims per year have fallen in many States parties. Over \$1 billion has been mobilized for mine action under the auspices of the Convention, with another \$1 billion from States not party to the Convention.

In fact, the Convention has been crucial in changing the behaviour not only of States parties but, importantly, of States not party. The Convention has irreversibly stigmatized anti-personnel landmines. Some States not party have self-imposed moratoriums in place on the use or transfer of landmines. The legal trade in anti-personnel landmines has all but halted.

Despite those successes, much still needs to be done, and challenges remain. The Convention is not universal, and key users and producers of anti-personnel landmines remain outside its purview. Efforts to universalize it are especially important in regions where adherence to its norms can have a

genuine impact on security, peacebuilding and development.

Australia has been particularly active in promoting adherence to the Convention in our own region, the Asia-Pacific. We are keen to ensure that mine action is sustainable and effective and subject to multi-year funding. Australia's mine action strategy, supported by a five-year pledge of \$75 million, aims to innovatively and holistically address the scourge of landmines. We support multi-year projects and have led efforts to link mine action and development, especially in Cambodia and Laos.

We are privileged today to be joined by three mine action experts. Each has faced great challenges in realizing the Convention's disarmament and humanitarian aims, and each has been instrumental in ensuring the Convention's success. The three panellists are authorities on different aspects of the Convention: clearance, military issues and victim assistance.

Our first speaker will be Mr. Mohammad Haider Reza, Director of the Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan. Before taking up that position, he served as the Chairman of the governmental Mine Action Consultative Group during his period as Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan. Since its accession to the Convention, Afghanistan has seen the largest mine clearance operation in the world, releasing over 594 million square metres of land. Mr. Reza will speak on mine clearance under the Convention.

The second speaker will be Mr. Ian Mansfield, Director of Operations at the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining. The Centre is among the pre-eminent mine action organizations providing practical assistance in operations, conducting research and setting mine action standards. In addition, the Centre provides the implementation support for the Mine Ban Convention. Prior to taking up his position with the Centre, Mr. Mansfield spent 23 years as an engineer with the Australian Defence Force. As commander of an engineer squadron in Brisbane, he was responsible for mine warfare issues. He was awarded the Conspicuous Service Cross in the 1993 Australia Day Honours List. With his depth of experience with the Australian Defence Force, Mr. Mansfield will be speaking on military aspects of mines under the Convention.

Our third speaker is Mr. Ken Rutherford. After losing his legs to a landmine in Somalia in 1993,

Mr. Rutherford co-founded the Landmine Survivors Network (LSN). Since its inception, LSN has developed a strong network of landmine survivors who work to empower the lives of other survivors. LSN operates offices in six countries — Bosnia and Herzegovina, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Jordan, Mozambique and Viet Nam — and has reached out to survivors in 43 of the 87 countries most affected by mines. Mr. Rutherford earned his doctorate at Georgetown University and has travelled widely to speak on the mass suffering caused by anti-personnel landmines and for the economic and social rights of the landmine disabled. Mr. Rutherford will be speaking to us about victim assistance under the Convention.

Before turning to the speakers, I would finally like to remind all members that Australia, along with Jordan and Croatia, has introduced a draft resolution on the implementation of the Convention. I urge all delegations to assist us in achieving the overwhelming positive vote, in this tenth anniversary year, that the resolution has enjoyed in previous years.

The Acting Chairperson: I now give the floor to Mr. Mohammad Haider Reza.

Mr. Reza (Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan): It is a pleasure for me to be here this morning. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the organizers for inviting me to this event.

The people of Afghanistan have lived for more than two and a half decades under the threat of rockets, mortars and gunfire. Finally now there is a possibility for peace and a brighter future. However, Afghanistan will never be able to reach its full potential until the legacy of mines is banished. Afghans can never fully reclaim their country from the shadow of war until those remnants of war are gone.

Afghanistan has the unfortunate distinction of being one of the most heavily contaminated countries in the world. We also suffer from one of the highest victim rates in the world. Half of those victims are children under the age of 18. Some 4 million Afghans in about 2,200 communities live in fear of stepping on a mine simply by walking to school, tilling land or grazing animals. The country has some 700 square kilometres of land contaminated by almost 55 different types of landmines. Thirty-two of our 34 provinces are impacted by mines or unexploded ordnance.

The contamination creates a climate of fear that drastically reduces the quality of life for Afghans. Mines and unexploded ordnance are not just an issue for Afghan villagers and the deminers working to help them. The clearance of mines and unexploded ordnance is a prerequisite for the reconstruction of roads, irrigation systems and power grids throughout the country — all of which are vital to Afghanistan's future. Mines and unexploded ordnance hinder the very development and stability of Afghanistan.

I led the Government of Afghanistan into a formal commitment to resolve its landmine problem by becoming the one hundred and twenty-sixth State member of the international Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, which entered into force for us in March 2003. The Convention obligates Afghanistan to provide mine risk education and victim assistance to the Afghan people and to clear emplaced mines by 2013. It highlights the fact that Afghanistan's landmines problem can be solved in years, and not decades. But in order to fulfil the obligations and free Afghans from the threat of mines, the Government of Afghanistan and the international community must regard mine action as one of their top priorities.

In 1989, the Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan (MAPA) began as the first indigenous mine action programme in the world. Today, MAPA has some 8,500 Afghans working across Afghanistan. Many of those employees have been with the Programme since its very beginning. It is because of that loyalty and dedication that MAPA is not just an organization, but a family that extends to the far reaches of Afghanistan.

I have now known many of the people working on mine action in Afghanistan for years. They have become some of the best experts in mine action in the world, and some of the world's most passionate advocates of mine action. The deminers of MAPA are truly the genuine cells of the country of Afghanistan. Their courage and dedication are unmatched. Every day they go to work, they face the possibility that they may not return home and that the very devices that they are trying to destroy will destroy them first.

Demining is incredibly dangerous. Demining is incredibly difficult. Why do those people do it? They do it for the simplest and best of reasons: they want a better Afghanistan. They want an Afghanistan that is safe for their children — an Afghanistan where farmers

can plant crops without fear, an Afghanistan that is primed for development, and an Afghanistan that is completely free from the scars of war.

Deminers these days are not just facing dangers from the remnants of past wars; they are the unfortunate targets of the instability that plagues parts of Afghanistan today. Astonishingly, deminers who are willing to lay down their lives for the future of Afghanistan have increasingly become the victims of insurgent attacks over the past month. We lost five of those brave men in the past eight weeks. They were abducted and killed by armed men in the south of the country. It is thanks to those deminers that more than 1,000 square kilometres of land infested by mines and unexploded ordnance land have been cleared to date. That represents about 60 per cent of all the contaminated land estimated to exist in Afghanistan. In recent years, more than 340,000 anti-personnel mines, more than 19,000 anti-tank mines and some 7.8 million pieces of unexploded ordnance have been destroyed.

Thanks to MAPA, more than 17 million Afghans have received mine risk education over the past 18 years. The number of Afghans killed or injured by mines and unexploded ordnance has dropped by more than 55 per cent over the past few years due to MAPA's mine risk education and clearance efforts. Thousands upon thousands of people can now return to their homes, send their children to school without fear and grow vegetable gardens to feed their families and generate income.

Deminers have also cleared the way for the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan. The Kabul University Campus, like most areas in the southern part of the capital city, was inaccessible to students and the local population 10 years ago. Our reconstruction projects — including more than 3,500 hectares of areas alongside primary and secondary roads, the Kabul International Airport and provincial airfields, hundreds of primary and secondary schools, the corridor for the new northern power line and more than a square kilometre around the Sardeh and Kajaki dams, which irrigate and produce much-needed electricity — are some examples of the good work that deminers have carried out in these past difficult years.

The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention has provided enormous stimulus for those activities. In particular, it has helped Afghanistan in both planning and implementing its clearance tasks and has enabled

us to present this information to the international community in a clear and transparent manner. Not only does the timeline of the Convention specify the legal requirements for compliance; it also enables the setting of measurable benchmarks providing a matrix against which we plan and implement our operational clearance activities.

Afghans have suffered enough for almost 30 years. Those of us who stayed in the country all those years witnessed how our beloved country was destroyed and how our people suffered pain and misery. As a surgeon, how many casualties have I had to help as a result of landmines and unexploded ordnance, and how many were not able to make it to facilities in time to receive the proper treatment? Landmines and unexploded ordnance are great obstacles to Afghanistan's security and development. The country cannot achieve the objectives it has set until and unless landmines and unexploded ordnance are destroyed.

We have a great challenge full of difficulties and danger. But we are determined to deal with the challenges with dedication and commitment. We are sure that we will free Afghanistan from the threats of landmines and unexploded ordnance. But in our endeavours we need the support of the international community to help us to achieve our dreams and hopes for the sake of humankind and for the sake of Afghanistan becoming a prosperous member of the international community.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our international donors and friends for their generous moral and in-kind contributions. But I would also like to remind everyone that the job is not done. It requires commitment from all of us.

The Acting Chairperson: I now give the floor to Mr. Ian Mansfield.

Mr. Mansfield (Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining): I am pleased to be here today to discuss the issue of the military utility of anti-personnel landmines.

As explained by Ambassador Millar, the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining works in the area of landmines and explosive remnants of war by providing operational assistance to mine-affected countries. It also undertakes practical research,

conducts evaluations and provides support to the relevant instruments of international law.

But perhaps we can ask the question: Why are we still discussing the topic of the usefulness of anti-personnel mines? In 1996 the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) gathered a large group of military experts from around the world to discuss the military utility of anti-personnel landmines and produced a small booklet entitled "Anti-personnel landmines: friend or foe?". That study found no historical evidence that anti-personnel mines were an essential weapon of war or had high military value. What limited military use anti-personnel mines had was far outweighed by the long-term humanitarian cost.

It is interesting to note that the study was not challenged at the time of its release. It continues to be supported by a wide variety of serving and retired military officers. Also, since 1996 there has been no need and no call to revise or update the study. The findings still remain relevant and valid. It is also interesting to observe that the 1997 Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention came into force following the study, in 1997.

By way of reinforcement of some of the points made in the study, 155 States have now banned anti-personnel landmines and no longer have them in their military arsenals. As Ambassador Millar mentioned, the Landmine Monitor organization has stated that there have been no legal sales of anti-personnel landmines in the world for the past five or six years. Countries do not want to buy anti-personnel mines any more. The new use of anti-personnel mines has declined dramatically, to about one or two cases per year, by States. Existing stockpiles of anti-personnel landmines have been destroyed by States parties to the Anti-Personnel Landmine Convention.

Let us quickly look at the historical use of anti-personnel landmines.

In conventional war, in the defensive posture, anti-personnel landmines were used to prevent infiltration and functioned as an early warning of the presence of an enemy. They were used to channel an opponent in a direction or location where he could be engaged with weapons. Anti-personnel mines were used to protect own positions, anti-tank minefields and other obstacles. They were also used to protect

withdrawal routes. In the offence, along with other types of mines, they were used to protect flanks, affect enemy manoeuvres and block reinforcements and withdrawals.

In both offence and defence, the use of anti-personnel mines has always been regarded as providing or offering only a delaying tactic. A determined enemy could always be expected to get through. Examples of that were seen in the Korean War and in the war between Iran and Iraq, where infantry troops assaulted straight through minefields.

What were some of the reasons armies used to put forward as arguments in favour of anti-personnel landmines? They were cheap. They were effective, because they had a high scare factor. They were flexible in their use. And responsible armies always recorded, mapped and marked where they were used. Let us quickly look at those reasons.

Cheap? Yes, simple blast mines were cheap: around \$5 to \$10 per item, with more complex fragmentation mines usually costing around \$50 to \$100. They are usually long-lasting, both in storage and in the ground. Unfortunately, being a cheap weapon has made them available to non-State actors or guerrilla groups. That may be where much of the problem with anti-personnel mines lies today — an issue that continues to need to be addressed. Anti-personnel landmines used by such groups are employed in an unconventional manner — that is, they are laid randomly, not recorded and often targeted against civilians.

Are they effective? The ICRC study found that historically anti-personnel landmines were not as effective as might have been thought. At the operational level of war, they can be ignored by a determined, well-trained and well-equipped army. The scare factor holds true at the level of the individual soldier. But, most unfortunately, most often they are used against civilians, who should not be the intended targets. Experts know that mines can be tactically constricting for commanders, as they are slow to lay — except, perhaps, for scatterable mines — and slow to pick up or clear. They are also a double-edged weapon, as many troops have been killed laying and clearing their own minefields or passing through them.

They are flexible. Mines can be flexible in that a commander can decide when and where to lay them. However, once in place, they are constricting and

costly in time and labour to clear. Minefields need to be covered by observation and fire to be effective. There are many examples where an enemy has stolen mines from a minefield and then re-used them against an opponent. A tragic example of that was the subject of a recent documentary highlighting the number of Australian troops killed and injured in Viet Nam by mines stolen from their own minefield.

Finally, responsible armies always map, mark and record their minefields. Again, sadly, in the ICRC study that was rarely found to be the case. Minefields are not marked and not mapped when they are laid.

What about alternatives to anti-personnel landmines? Clearly, it is not the job of our Centre to help improve countries' war-fighting capabilities. But the issue of alternatives is relevant. The ICRC study found some military justification for anti-tank or anti-vehicle mines when directed against military targets. Those are not banned by the Ottawa Convention, and there has been no agreement in the Certain Conventional Weapons Convention on further restrictions on their use. That perhaps suggests that their utility is less in question. Enhanced use can be made of existing obstacles, such as natural features, fences, ditches and barbed wire. Greater use can be made of command-detonated weapons. Enhanced use can be made of surveillance devices, night vision equipment, trip flares and acoustic devices and so on. Changes to tactics and doctrines can overcome the loss of this capability.

The real question therefore is: Do we need to replace anti-personnel mines at all, or have they already been replaced? One could argue that they were useful in the Second World War and possibly in Korea. But have simple improvements to other military equipment since that time already replaced their utility? Has the changing nature of armed conflict today rendered them obsolete? If the perceived utility is so high, why is there almost no work on finding a replacement in the militaries of the 155 States parties to the Ottawa Convention? Why is it not a priority within their military research and development programmes to develop an alternate weapon? Is it because replacing them is not seen as a real operational requirement? Have anti-personnel mines gone the way of the horse and the sword as obsolete weapons of war?

In many ways, the time has come to stop having this discussion about the military utility of

anti-personnel landmines. Militaries will of course always argue to retain a capability or weapon. However, the changing nature of armed conflict, improvements in other surveillance and detection devices and the experience of the 155 States parties to the Anti-Personnel Landmine Convention have shown that the time of the anti-personnel landmine is past. Whatever utility it may have had is far outweighed by the long-term humanitarian cost to civilians.

The Acting Chairperson: Lastly, I now give the floor to Mr. Ken Rutherford.

Mr. Rutherford (Landmine Survivors Network): I would like to thank the Chairperson and Ambassador Millar for inviting me here today to speak on victim assistance.

Ten years ago, the Mine Ban Convention did not exist. It was signed in December 1997. Ten years ago, there was not one arms control treaty in the world that had a victim assistance component to it. The Mine Ban Convention is the first international arms control agreement that has a component for survivor or victim assistance. It is a wonderful standard that the international community set in addressing the issues of military weapons.

Two years ago, the States parties to the Mine Ban Convention met in Nairobi to develop a Nairobi action plan on breaking out survivor assistance and implementing States' obligations. As part of that process, the idea was no longer survivor assistance — just giving an amputee a leg, a prosthetic, charity; it was to develop a plan for the international community to address the rights of hundreds of thousands of landmine victims around the world. Those principles were reaffirmed last year when the General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (resolution 61/106). The Convention, which was signed in December, helps to address the needs of people with disabilities around the world.

In terms of mine victims and people with disabilities and addressing their needs, there is a timeframe to look at their needs, and for implementation. First, as a landmine survivor myself, it was hard for me to describe the pain and agony of what a survivor goes through. Emergency medical care is therefore addressed in the Nairobi Action Plan 2005-2009. Many landmine victims die from blood loss, for immediate emergency care is not provided to them. In my particular accident, in Somalia, I had 19

blood transfusions within the first 24 hours. Most are not so lucky.

Another component of survivor assistance is health coverage. A landmine survivor has continuing medical needs. Again, in my personal example, I had over 13 surgeries. As a result, I lost both my legs.

Next is physical therapy. This is an issue of national capability, which can be used with States parties that have signed the Mine Ban Convention and, most recently, the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. Ensuring the effective provision of physical therapy for survivors is essential for their social and economic reintegration.

Psychological support and social reintegration is another component of survivor assistance. A large part of becoming an amputee is peer-to-peer support and, from seeing the examples of others, realizing that one is not alone and that one has strength from within. Many States parties to the Mine Ban Convention have supported peer-to-peer support networks around the world. Increasingly, we are seeing many victims of improvised explosive devices and landmines from international military forces in Iraq, especially Americans coming back to the United States without their legs. Having peer-to-peer support visits at Walter Reed Army Hospital helps their social reintegration.

Economic integration is another area of survivor assistance that was not addressed 10 years ago. When one loses a leg or arm or is blinded — such as in Afghanistan, where there are many thousands of survivors who have lost their sight — economic integration is key. We always say that the best form of survivor assistance is a job. Vocational training skills are important for an individual to become a productive member of society. This particular component was important 10 years ago in negotiating the Mine Ban Convention, which expressly refers to, and calls for, the social and economic reintegration of mine survivors. Article 6, paragraph 3 states that “Each State Party in a position to do so shall provide assistance for the care and rehabilitation, and social and economic reintegration, of mine victims.”

Finally, there is the issue of law and public policies. The phrase “each State Party in a position to do so” in the Mine Ban Convention has been an excuse for some Governments to do nothing: we are not in a position to do so; we signed the treaty but we do not have the economic or financial wherewithal to

implement it. That should not be an excuse. For instance, people with disabilities can be appointed to Government positions — for example, being put in charge of the disabilities portfolio. Government efforts can also be as simple as moving administrative school offices from the ground floor to the second floor so that children with wheelchairs can attend class on the ground floor and not have to crawl up steps.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was signed here in New York last year. Many of the articles of that Convention parallel the Nairobi Action Plan. For example, action 34 of the Nairobi Action Plan refers to developing or enhancing national capacities for collecting data on mine victims, while article 31 of the Convention also calls for statistics and data collection. There are many parallels between what was done in the Assembly last year, what was done in Oslo and Ottawa 10 years ago and what was done in Nairobi two years ago. All mutually reinforce the developing trend to support survivor assistance.

The Acting Chairperson: It is now my intention to provide the Committee with an opportunity to hold an interactive discussion with our panel members through an informal question-and-answer session. I will suspend the meeting in order to continue our discussion in an informal mode.

The meeting was suspended at 11.45 a.m. and resumed at 12.25 p.m.

The Acting Chairperson: I will now give the floor to those delegations wishing to make statements or introduce draft resolutions on the subject of other weapons of mass destruction.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Hassan (Sudan): Mr. Chairman, it is indeed my pleasure to see you, Sir, chairing this meeting.

Allow me at the outset to express our appreciation to the efforts and presentations made at our 12th meeting by Mr. Rogelio Pfirter, Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and the panellists. We would also like to salute our colleagues in the delegation of Poland, as they are presenting the draft resolution on the Chemical Weapons Convention, and of course to extend our appreciation to the delegation of the Netherlands for organizing the High-level Meeting on

the Tenth Anniversary of the Entry into Force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction.

The Government of the Sudan signed the Chemical Weapons Convention in its early stages in 1996. Furthermore, in 2004 our capital, Khartoum, hosted the first African institutional conference on the prohibition of chemical weapons, which later culminated in the determination of the participants to have a chemical-weapon-free zone in Africa.

As we stated during the general debate, the recent developments in the field of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery means, including chemical weapons, represent an imminent danger to the survival of humanity and the most serious challenge to the integrity and credibility of the nuclear non-proliferation regime in the context of multilateralism, having in mind the illicit network in nuclear technology and the great risk of access to such weapons, including chemical weapons, by terrorist groups and non-State actors.

The adoption of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) was indeed a very important step forward in the fight against the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their delivery means. However, if the implementation of that important text is to succeed, international, regional and subregional institutions must play their role in assisting developing countries in their endeavours and efforts. Furthermore, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and chemical weapons must move towards a global disarmament process to discourage a new arms race.

The cornerstone for non-proliferation in all its aspects is the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, especially in the Middle East, a very inflamed part of the world. In this regard, my delegation joins other speakers who call for the full submission of all of Israel's nuclear programmes to the International Atomic Energy Agency Comprehensive Safeguard System. Sudan further calls on all Member States to ratify the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty — the Pelindaba Treaty — so that it can enter into force without further delay.

The Acting Chairperson: I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

Ms. García Jordán (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The existence of weapons of mass destruction continues to be a major threat to international peace and security. The purpose of all the efforts made by States in disarmament processes should be aimed at the complete and total elimination of such weapons. In that regard, Cuba and other countries members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM) reaffirm that all States must comply with their obligations related to arms control, disarmament and the prevention of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in all its aspects.

Cuba is a State party to, and strictly abides by all provisions of, the international legal instruments prohibiting weapons of mass destruction, such as the 1925 Geneva Protocol, the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

At the High-Level Meeting on the Tenth Anniversary of the Entry into Force of the CWC, Cuba, on behalf of NAM members that are parties to the Convention, called for its complete, effective and non-discriminatory implementation and for the prohibition and total elimination of all forms of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons. As a State party to the CWC, Cuba continues to play an active role, urging that its implementation entail a balanced focus on its three fundamental pillars: disarmament, including verification; assistance; and cooperation. We reiterate our appeal to developed countries to promote genuine international cooperation through the transfer of technologies, materials and equipment for the use of chemicals for peaceful purposes.

The discriminatory restrictions that some States continue to impose on certain States parties to the Convention regarding transfers for the peaceful use of chemical agents and materials are totally contrary to the letter and spirit of the CWC. It is essential to ensure the immediate elimination of all discriminatory restrictions that impede the access of States parties to chemical materials for peaceful purposes. Full and effective implementation of the Convention's provisions on international cooperation is vital for the objectives and purposes of the Convention as a whole.

Cuba reiterates that any possibility of any use of bacteriological and toxin agents as weapons must be completely eliminated. Cuba has always advocated

strengthening the BWC through a multilaterally negotiated and legally binding international legal instrument that would make it possible to verify its implementation. Such an instrument should include balanced and broad verification of all articles of the Convention.

We share the legitimate international concern at the risk that terrorist groups will acquire weapons of mass destruction. At the same time, Cuba insists that such risks cannot be eliminated through a selective approach that is limited to horizontal proliferation, ignoring disarmament and vertical proliferation. If we really want to combat the possible use of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists, urgent progress is needed in the area of disarmament, including in the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction.

A number of initiatives being promoted by groups of countries, including the Proliferation Security Initiative, have never been multilaterally negotiated. Rather than helping to resolve the problem, those initiatives are weakening the role of the United Nations in the fight against the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in all its aspects.

Cuba does not possess, and does not intend to possess, weapons of mass destruction in any form. We reaffirm our firm commitment to the complete and effective implementation of the relevant legal instruments and offer our efforts to attain that objective, in the interest of international peace and security. Cuba will continue to be fully committed to the objective of the complete elimination of weapons of mass destruction and will contribute as much as possible to the central role of the United Nations in that regard.

Mr. Najafi (Islamic Republic of Iran): We are pleased to see you, Sir, presiding over this meeting of the First Committee.

My statement is focused on the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). As the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran noted three weeks ago, the CWC is indeed of significant importance to Iran. No nation has suffered more from chemical weapons than the Iranian people. Iran, as the only victim of the use of chemical weapons in recent history, is intimately familiar with the very destructive effects of the use of such weapons.

With tens of thousands of victims of the cruel chemical attacks launched by the regime of Saddam Hussein during the war imposed on Iran, my country has witnessed the sufferings of those innocent people while having to shoulder the burden of single-handedly alleviating their painful plight. That bitter experience has become a determining factor in the national security strategy of the Islamic Republic of Iran to renounce all types of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and in our unshaken resolve to pursue the realization of the goal of a world free from such weapons.

The Islamic Republic of Iran played a significant role during the negotiations on the CWC. Since ratifying the Convention, Iran has successfully implemented its obligations and has fully cooperated with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, demonstrating its accountability in that regard to the international community.

My country rightly expects other Member States to remain accountable with regard to their obligations under this important international instrument. It is obvious that the destruction of all existing chemical weapons and the observance of the deadlines provided for that purpose are of primary importance.

The threat of chemical weapons is dangerously real. To rid the world of that threat and to fully achieve the purposes and objectives of the Convention, the universality of the CWC must be ensured. However, the situation with regard to adherence to the CWC in the Middle East region is not promising. By refusing to subject itself to any type of international monitoring, the notorious possessor of WMD — namely, the Israeli regime — continues to be the only obstacle to the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. As long as that regime continues to develop nuclear, biological and chemical weapons in its secret facilities with impunity, there is no prospect for the universality of the CWC in our region.

The threats emanating from the possibility of the use of chemical weapons and agents by terrorist groups also underline the need to effectively counter that mounting danger in a non-discriminatory manner.

Iran accords the highest priority to ensuring the integrity of the Convention as well as its full and non-discriminatory implementation, in particular with regard to its article XI. The Convention is integrated as

a whole — that is, it is an interwoven body of norms whose provisions are mutually reinforcing. It is impossible to neglect or violate any one part without undermining the entire Convention. The continuation of the non-transparent ad hoc export-control regimes can only damage the Convention and the achievement of its long-term goal, which we have all pledged to support. It is fundamental to ensure the removal or prevent the imposition of any discriminatory restriction on access to materials, equipment and technology by developing States parties to the Convention for their continued and peaceful development.

The other important provisions of the Convention are related to protection and assistance. As provided by article X of the Convention, “assistance” means medical antidotes and treatments for victims of the use of these inhuman weapons. However, the medical treatment is insufficient and can only cover a part of the needs of the victims. The other humanitarian aspects of the assistance to the victims of chemical weapons should be explored and brought to fruition.

One of the unexplored dimensions is to bring to justice the culprits who supported the use of such weapons. As credible records indicate, Saddam’s regime was assisted in its development of chemical weapons by a number of countries, which provided materials and precursors. The same countries, both financially and through banking systems, supported Saddam’s weapons of mass destruction programme. Those countries are responsible for the killing and disabling of tens of thousands of Iranian victims of chemical substances. They should take measures to bring the perpetrators to justice and compensate for the injuries and casualties incurred as a result of their irresponsible actions.

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the CWC States parties should address this issue seriously and responsibly. That responsibility should not be ignored by the members of the international community, particularly the CWC member States. In this context, an international conference on the adverse consequences of using chemical weapons against Iran was held in my country just yesterday.

In conclusion, I would like to remind this Committee that three weeks ago our Minister for Foreign Affairs proposed that the OPCW should establish a task force to examine and investigate the

ways and means by which Saddam was equipped with chemical weapons. He reiterated his proposal yesterday in Tehran. Indeed, publishing of the results of the efforts of such group would play a great role in preventing such crimes from occurring in the future.

Mr. Langeland (Norway): The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) have set fundamental norms on disarmament and non-proliferation of two categories of weapons of mass destruction. They have greatly contributed to our common security.

Norway was highly encouraged by the successful outcome of the sixth Review Conference of the BTWC in December last year. That Conference demonstrated that when countries focus on common goals, important results can be achieved. We appreciated the constructive way the President of the Review Conference guided our deliberations.

It is now important to fully implement the Intersessional Programme 2007-2010 adopted at the Review Conference. To this end, we welcome the establishment of the new Implementation Support Unit within the Office of Disarmament Affairs. Yet, the prime responsibility to ensure full implementation lies with the States parties themselves.

It is vital that all States parties put in place and enforce legislation to ensure full compliance with the obligations of the Biological Weapons Convention. We recognize that countries may need assistance to this end. Norway has provided funding for regional workshops to facilitate implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004).

The threat of bioterrorism makes it even more important to renew our preventive efforts in the field of biosafety and biosecurity. This is an area that Norway will devote particular attention to and one where we have allocated resources to assist other States parties.

Scientific cooperation in the life sciences is very much part of the Biological Weapons Convention. The Review Conference last year reconfirmed that many activities are going on in this field. The Intersessional Programme will further enhance such cooperation. The health sector is indeed a priority area for Norwegian development cooperation.

We regret that the BTWC has not achieved the same level of universalization as the CWC and the

Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Norway urges countries that have not joined this Convention to do so without delay. We welcome the four new States parties.

The commemoration of the CWC last month illustrated the impressive results achieved by this Convention. Yet, we must refrain from complacency. We must pursue our endeavours to further strengthen the Convention. We must continue working to universalize that instrument and promote full national implementation of its obligations. To this end, Norway has contributed to projects in Russia, the Baltic region, Eastern Africa and Central Asia, and we are ready to continue our financial contributions for the promotion of the Convention.

It is imperative that existing stocks of chemical weapons are destroyed within agreed time limits. We encourage countries concerned to do their utmost in this respect. There is a need to further refine the Convention's verification and inspection mechanism. Challenge inspections should be used when needed. We must ensure that the use of riot control agents conforms to the provisions of the Convention and does not have unacceptable humanitarian implications.

All States parties must put in place and enforce national legislation to achieve full compliance with the Convention. While the number of States parties is growing, we have to reach full universality. We urge countries that have not joined this Convention to do so without delay. The second Review Conference of the CWC next year provides us a new opportunity to further strengthen the Convention. We must make good use of it.

The 1925 Geneva Protocol remains highly relevant. We urge those countries that do not adhere to that instrument to do so in a timely manner, and we call upon those States having reservations to their accession to lift them as soon as possible. Norway would also like to reiterate the importance of engaging the civil society in the promotion and implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Mr. Dobelle (France) (*spoke in French*): My statement has two parts. First I would like to introduce our draft resolution entitled "Preventing the acquisition by terrorists of radioactive materials and sources", which my country has submitted to the Committee

secretariat. Then, I have a few remarks on biological and chemical weapons.

First, I have a few comments in presenting our draft resolution on “Preventing the acquisition by terrorists of radioactive materials and sources” (A/C.1/62/L.46). Like the text adopted by consensus two years ago in the General Assembly, on France’s initiative, this resolution continues to focus on the issue of radiological terrorism rather than nuclear terrorism, which is already somewhat covered by other texts. This draft updates and enriches resolution 60/73 — which the Assembly adopted by consensus in 2005 — without modifying its scope.

The draft resolution has a tripartite goal: first, to support the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which plays a central role in the area of security and safety of radioactive sources; secondly, to support the universalization of existing international instruments; and lastly, to call for developing bilateral and multilateral cooperation aimed at strengthening the safety and security of radioactive sources, particularly by means of more effective control.

The title of the resolution has been amended in order to highlight its goal, which is to call upon Member States to implement varying means to prevent terrorists from acquiring radioactive materials or sources. Such means include detection of trafficking, regulatory controls of exported radioactive sources in the countries of destination, and international action to search for, locate and secure orphan radioactive sources.

A new paragraph calls upon Member States to strengthen detection of potential illicit trafficking of radioactive materials within their borders, beyond the controls that they should have already established at their borders. I note that this item caused no problems during the informal consultations that my delegation recently organized, though all of us do understand that in this area as in others, each has to act on the basis of the best means available.

In the implementation of the IAEA’s efforts, the accent was placed on the responsibility, with respect to security and safety for these sources, of those States that produce and provide radioactive sources. To our mind, it goes without saying that we will continue to apply these prescriptions to ourselves because, as everyone knows, in the area that we are addressing

here, my country has an industry and infrastructure that are particularly developed.

A new operative paragraph has been added to commend the efforts of Member States working with relevant international organizations and partnerships to search for, locate and secure non-controlled sources — the so-called orphan sources — and unsecured sources. That seemed to us to be important for stimulating the continuation of such efforts.

Lastly, a point was introduced in paragraph 7 to take into account the various initiatives and partnerships that contribute to the reinforcement by States of their national capacities. For example, we are thinking of the Group of Eight plan of action adopted in Evian in 2005 to guarantee the security of radioactive sources. We have taken care, following comments made by certain delegations during the informal consultations, to underscore the complementary nature of those initiatives with respect to the actions of the IAEA.

This, in brief, is the general spirit of the text that we are introducing this year. Naturally, we hope that it will, as it was two years, be adopted without a vote, in order to flag the unanimous concerns of the international community with respect to the risk of radiological terrorism.

Now, Mr. Chairperson, I would make a few comments on biological and chemical weapons. On this point, the statement of my delegation is in full accord with the substance of the statement made by the Portuguese presidency of the European Union on this segment of our debate.

The First Committee of the General Assembly was set up to address subjects that have to do with all types of weapons, that is, nuclear and conventional, as well as the perhaps more diverse category that we would describe as “other weapons of mass destruction”, and that covers both chemical and biological weapons. This relative diversity should not lead us to believe that this would be a category of secondary weapons with minor effects compared to the preceding ones. Quite the contrary.

Historically, in fact, the number of victims of these weapons is quite considerable. More than 100,000 people were killed by the use of chemical gas during the First World War in Europe. My country is one of those most affected by that devastation. That is

why we are particularly sensitive to these weapons. Unfortunately, there are also more recent cases of use, with which we are all familiar, so I will not refer to them here.

Biological weapons have not been as widely used, yet their effect could be even more devastating. Let us not forget that the greatest infectious epidemic in all of Europe's history was the Black Plague of 1348 and that it spread following a deliberate manoeuvre to propagate it. We are obviously very far from those remote times, but we need to remind ourselves that the threat not only continues, but has become potentially even more devastating with scientific advances. That should in no way cause us to call into question medical and technological progress that we all benefit from, but we should adjust our level of vigilance to that of the risks that we need to face.

The development of transnational terrorism perpetrated by entities that do not have structured State infrastructure but are determined to cause massive destruction — which so painfully ushered in the twenty-first century here in New York — is another factor that, regardless of the varying categories of weapons dealt with here, serves as a reminder of the relevance of this thematic debate.

The measures taken by the international community to address these weapons in this context are greatly varied in terms of their intensity and scope. I am not going to repeat everything that has been said here by my Portuguese colleague or others on the comparative merits of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which has a complete and effective verification regime, of the Biological Weapons Convention, for which we recently took part in improving, and the 1925 Protocol on the use of both types of weapons. As the depositary State, we call upon all States that have not yet done so to ratify the Protocol and, where necessary, lift the reservations that they made when they acceded to it.

These are all instruments crafted during the time of confrontation of States before, during or immediately after the cold war, but all of these instruments continue to be more relevant than ever in the context of non-proliferation.

That is why my delegation provides its full support to the resolutions submitted by the delegations of Poland and Hungary on the CWC and BWC respectively. We obviously would have liked, in certain

places, to see certain aspects be more strengthened and certain progress better reflected, but we do understand that maintaining a consensus requires compromising with those delegations whose views we do not share or that are seeking to undervalue the progress made within the frameworks of those conventions. In that regard, we thank Poland and Hungary for their efforts and their excellent work.

That being said, in order to strengthen the response of the international community to the nature of the risks we are facing, we have had to develop new approaches based more on immediate and concerted action by States. I need not reiterate to the Committee the commitment of my country within the mechanism set up under Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), the initiative taken by the Group of Eight, and the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), also known as the Krakow initiative.

On how these instruments operate, like many delegations, France welcomes the positive outcomes of the sixth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention. This outcome is the result of the excellent manner in which my colleague, Mr. Mahmood Khan of Pakistan, carried out his mission as President, and of the active involvement of a number of delegations, including my country's, on the issue of improving access to information exchanged within the framework of confidence-building measures.

We believe that the measures taken from this standpoint by the sixth Review Conference have truly strengthened this mechanism, and we would like to say this even more clearly than the resolution on this instrument will. Similarly, my country is certain that in years to come we will appreciate the extent to which the continuing of the intersessional process and the establishment of the support group for the Convention will be valuable gains in our future work within this body.

Furthermore, like the Portuguese presidency of the European Union, we call for complete universalization of both instruments. We must note that universalization is further along with the Chemical Weapons Convention than with the Biological Weapons Convention.

Regarding the Chemical Weapons Convention, we welcome the initiative of the Netherlands and Poland to organize, with the support of the Office of

Disarmament Affairs, a high-level meeting on the margins of our deliberations to commemorate the tenth anniversary of this essential instrument. After ten years of implementation, the achievements of the Chemical Weapons Convention are remarkable from any standpoint.

It is more than ever essential for the international community in its entirety to mobilize in order to build upon those gains and preserve the CWC regime in a spirit of responsibility, steadfastness and credibility, and with the long-term view in mind. That goal should be pursued in the area of disarmament as much as in chemical non-proliferation. There must be a comprehensive mobilization to ensure that the deadline set for the destruction of chemical weapons by the Chemical Weapons Convention can be met. Similarly, the effectiveness of the verification regime must be strengthened, especially as regards industry, so that this unique tool can be continuously adapted to the new challenges of the twenty-first century. Lastly, achieving the universality of the norms should take place as soon as possible.

With regard to those ambitious goals — which I am convinced are nevertheless altogether realistic — the holding in 2008 of the second CWC Review Conference will be a major milestone as regards the international community's ongoing resolve vis-à-vis disarmament, chemical non-proliferation and international security. For its part, France will continue its own efforts to those ends and will further unreservedly support those of the OPCW.

Ms. Millar (Australia): The proliferation of chemical and biological weapons is a potentially serious threat to global and regional security. Australia, along with many States, has long worked hard to counter that threat.

In 1985, Australia convened the first meeting of 15 nations in Brussels in response to the then Iraqi regime's use of chemical weapons in its war with Iran. The 15 participants sought to prevent the Iraqi regime from acquiring materials to build chemical weapons through otherwise legitimate commercial trade. Their response — harmonized national export controls — led to the Australia Group's birth. Since then, the international community has strengthened its efforts to rid the world of chemical weapons once and for all.

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) marked its tenth anniversary earlier this year. In the

past decade, the Convention has emerged as a vital cornerstone of the multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. Its significance is reflected in its goals, namely, the total and verifiable elimination of chemical weapons.

It is regrettable that progress towards that goal is proceeding more slowly than anticipated and that some States continue to remain outside the Convention. Australia urges possessor States to continue to work assiduously towards meeting their agreed destruction timelines, and for States remaining outside the Convention to accede to and implement the Convention without delay.

A critical factor in the strength of the CWC is the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The OPCW has ensured the effective operation of the CWC's verification regime, an essential tool for ensuring full and effective implementation of the Convention. Moreover, the OPCW has facilitated international cooperation in the peaceful uses of chemistry. Under its watch, the Convention has made progress towards its disarmament purpose through the destruction of 23,912 tons of chemical-weapon agent. On the tenth anniversary of the OPCW, we acknowledge the efforts and dedication of the OPCW Director-General and its Technical Secretariat.

In parallel with the CWC, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention is strengthening global defences against biological weapons and bioterrorism. Australia welcomes the agreement at the last BWC Review Conference to measures that will promote the Treaty's universalization and ensure its full and effective implementation. Those measures help to strengthen the BWC's role in international security and, in turn, assist States to meet their obligations to counter bioterrorism under Security Council resolution 1540 (2004).

Under the action plan for the universalization of the Convention that was agreed at the Review Conference, Australia has undertaken several initiatives, including at the ministerial level, to promote accession to the Convention in the Asia-Pacific region. Effective national implementation has also been a focus of Australia's promotion of the Convention and its aims in the Asia-Pacific region.

This year, Australia provided biosafety and biosecurity training for regional experts, covering

issues such as national legislation, the enhanced security of pathogens and toxins, biodefence and surveillance, codes of conduct for scientists, and the role of the BWC against bioterrorism. In addition, Australia welcomes the creation of the BWC Implementation Support Unit and the cycle of intersessional meetings, as endorsed at the Review Conference. The BWC Implementation Support Unit is already playing a critical role in promoting national implementation and universalization, as well as facilitating the coordination of other international activities that strengthen the Convention.

Australia also values the intersessional meetings of experts and States parties, which help keep the international community focused on issues covered by the BWC and abreast of relevant advances in the life sciences.

Finally, we take the opportunity of this thematic debate to again call on States not parties to the BWC to accede to it without delay.

The Acting Chairperson: We are approaching the end of our allotted time this morning. I therefore propose to adjourn the meeting. This afternoon, the Committee will first conclude its discussion on other weapons of mass destruction and then hold its thematic discussion on other disarmament measures and international security. We will have as a guest speaker Mr. John Barrett, Chairman of the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Verification in All Its Aspects, including the Role of the United Nations in

the Field of Verification. After the discussion, the Chair will give the floor to those delegations wishing to make statements and introduce draft resolutions on conventional weapons.

(spoke in Arabic)

Before adjourning the meeting, I would sincerely thank all the interpreters for giving us some extra time.

(spoke in English)

I now give the floor to the Secretary of the Committee to make an announcement.

Mr. Sareva (Secretary of the Committee): I have three brief announcements. First, as of today, members will find in the documents booth information notes by the Secretariat that contain lists of additional co-sponsors of draft resolutions and decisions. The first list is out today and will be updated daily. Secondly, the African Group will hold a brief meeting in this Conference Room immediately after the adjournment of this meeting. Thirdly, the Control Arms campaign and the Governments of Argentina, Australia, Costa Rica, Finland, Japan, Kenya and the United Kingdom invite all States to an event entitled "Next steps towards an effective arms trade treaty". That event will start immediately after this meeting at the Consulate General of Finland.

The Chairperson: The Committee will meet this afternoon at 3 p.m. sharp in Conference Room 4.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.