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First Committee

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Official Records

Chairperson: Mr. Badji (Senegal)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.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*): We will first proceed with the list of speakers on conventional weapons. Towards the end of the meeting, I will outline the way in which we shall proceed with our work during the final stage of our work, during which we will take decisions on draft resolutions and draft decisions.

Mr. Rodríguez Zahar (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I will be brief, given our time constraints. My delegation fully joins in the statement made by the delegation of Guatemala, on behalf of the member countries of the Central American Integration System. We would simply like to emphasize a few points.

Mexico, as a country that has been seriously affected by the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons, attaches the highest priority to solving this problem. We understand that this is a matter that can only be addressed through international cooperation and consultation under the principle of shared responsibility and that requires the active participation of several Governmental and non-governmental actors. All States, as well as producers, exporters and arms brokers, non-governmental organizations and, of

course, the relevant intergovernmental bodies, must redouble our efforts to achieve the goals of the Programme of Action on Small Arms.

In this context, I would like to point out that action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is, for the Government of President Calderón, one of the pillars of its policy of national security and its international agenda. It is a fact that the excessive accumulation and availability of small arms and light weapons, as well as the weak controls to regulate them in some countries, have frequently led to a shift of these types of weapons and munitions to the illegal market, which has led to urban violence and organized crime.

For this reason, Mexico has consistently supported the resolution on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, which is prepared every year by the delegations of Colombia, Japan and South Africa. It is for that reason that we wish to state our recognition for their efforts to reflect the very varied concerns of all States. We understand that the main purpose of the draft resolution is to ensure continuity in the process, especially after the failure of the 2006 conference. In that regard, we hope that the necessary political will will be there to ensure the success of the 2008 Biennial Meeting of States.

As we can see once again from the statements of representatives of non-governmental organizations that we heard last Friday and in papers recently published on the question, it is urgent for the international community to undertake concerted action to avoid

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injury and death in hundreds of thousands of victims of the inappropriate and criminal use of firearms. In this regard, the implementation of the Programme of Action must take into account the multidimensional nature of the problem, including its humanitarian aspects, and complement or develop new measures to achieve effective control of the trade and transfer of small arms and light weapons, including aspects related to regulating civilian possession. We must also identify and agree on binding measures among States in the struggle against the various aspects of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and promote the participation of international agencies and civil society organizations.

Nevertheless, to address some of these issues in only the one week of work that has been set aside for the Biennial Meeting of States in 2008, it will be necessary to establish a prior and well-organized process of consultation. We must ensure that the time devoted to that meeting will not be used up in the mere presentation of national reports but that it will allow us to address substantive issues and to explore viable formulas to strengthen the Programme of Action.

Mr. Faaborg-Andersen (Denmark): Denmark fully associates itself with the cluster statement on conventional weapons that was made by the Portuguese presidency on behalf of the European Union. However, my delegation would like to add a few words to highlight the importance of working effectively towards the early adoption of an international arms trade treaty. Denmark has strongly supported the arms trade treaty initiative from an early stage. The Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs expressed his support for a legally binding treaty at the General Assembly as early as in 2005. We were therefore pleased to note the wide support obtained last year for resolution 61/89. Indeed, the adoption of that resolution and the initiation of the process towards an arms trade treaty was one of the most notable achievements during last year's session. We also continue to appreciate the active involvement and substantive contributions of civil society to this important matter.

The arms trade treaty should establish legally binding common standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms. It should cover all conventional arms and contribute to the efforts of the United Nations towards international peace and stability. It must therefore include strong provisions regarding respect for international law, including

human rights law, humanitarian law and the Charter of the United Nations. We must prevent the transfer of weapons when there is a serious risk that they will contribute to violations of human rights and humanitarian law.

For a more detailed account of the Danish position, allow me to refer to the Danish response to the Secretary-General's request for views. Denmark fully supports the work of the group of governmental experts to be established in 2008 and encourages all Member States to actively support the work of that group and the further work towards the adoption of an arms trade treaty.

Mr. Abdalla (Sudan) (*speak in Arabic*): My delegation would like to associate itself with those that have emphasized the great importance of dealing with the problem of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. My delegation would also like to reiterate the importance of addressing this issue in an integrated manner that ensures that producer countries commit themselves not to export weapons to non-State movements and individuals and that leads to the adoption by concerned States of comprehensive strategies to combat this phenomenon at the national level. We also wish to underscore the importance of providing international support and assistance to affected countries, in line with the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, given that poor and developing countries are the most affected by this phenomenon.

States have made numerous valuable efforts to deal with this issue — including establishing national offices, adopting legislation, putting in place adequate control mechanisms, improving performance in the management of weapons stocks, eliminating unused ones, and identifying and tracing such weapons. All of that requires highly technical expertise and the optimal use of the specialized technology.

With regard to follow-up, cross-boundary control and national efforts, we attach special importance to international and national efforts by developed States to provide technical and financial assistance to affected States in order that they can incorporate that assistance into their national programmes, in line with the provisions of section III of the aforementioned Programme of Action. It is crucial that we support the

clear and concrete national efforts referred to in national reports from States, which illustrate their efforts to implement the Programme of Action since the holding of the Conference in 2001. At the moment, there is limited international support for countries' efforts.

The delegation of the Sudan supports the proposal to create a trust fund for the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms. However, the work of the fund should be carried out in accordance with specific priorities, which include the following.

First, technical and financial assistance should be provided at the request of the specialized bodies of the countries concerned. The priority should be to provide financial support to cover the cost of technology. Secondly, special attention should also be accorded to training programmes and capacity-building at the international level, especially with regard to the technical needs of national agencies in the areas of excess stock destruction, border surveillance, tracing, monitoring and limiting entry points at the national and regional levels.

The delegation of the Sudan would like to reaffirm the importance of exchanging information and services, as well as technology transfers and providing adequate technical tools to the countries that do not possess them. It is also important to utilize existing channels of communication by establishing national focal points, which were called for in the Programme of Action but which have not actively exchanged information at either the bilateral or regional levels, owing to the lack of adequate technology for the exchange of information and weak data collection and analysis systems. Providing assistance in that regard will make it possible for local focal points to submit annual reports on their efforts at eradicating small arms and light weapons.

In conclusion, my delegation believes that the forthcoming Review Conference will be an excellent opportunity to agree concrete ways to implement the provisions of section III of the Programme of Action on Small Arms, so as to provide international assistance and support to countries in order that they can implement their national programmes.

Mr. Čekuolis (Lithuania) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time that I take the floor, I would like at the outset, to congratulate you, Mr. Chairperson, on

your election to preside over the First Committee. I assure you of the full support of my delegation as you carry out your work.

(*spoke in English*)

On behalf of the European Union (EU), the representative of Portugal earlier delivered an exhaustive statement on the issues relating to conventional weapons, which Lithuania fully endorses. I shall therefore focus on a few issues that Lithuania takes into particular consideration. In order to help the Committee to comply with its time schedule, I will try to make my intervention as brief as possible. The full written text of my statement will be available in the Room.

In a relatively short period of 10 years, the Mine Ban Treaty has made an extraordinary contribution to creating a mine-free world. Beyond that, the treaty has produced new patterns of partnerships between Governments and civil society not seen before. Despite its unquestionable success, however, some important challenges remain — the destruction of stockpiles being one of them. Although meeting the Treaty's obligations is the responsibility of the States parties concerned, complex tasks — especially for affected States parties — could and should be facilitated through international and regional cooperation and assistance. As the incoming Chair of the Standing Committee on Stockpile Destruction, Lithuania calls for the acceleration of such international efforts and is ready to mediate the accomplishment of that task.

Lithuania has consistently advocated the adoption of high humanitarian norms at all levels and in all domains. That also applies to regulating the use of cluster munitions. It is in that spirit that we signed the Oslo Declaration on Cluster Munitions and supported including this issue in 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 (CCW). Processes both within and without the United Nations system are seen as mutually reinforcing and aimed at one final goal. However, we feel that at their annual meeting in November, CCW States parties must achieve substantial progress in order to prove the relevance and credibility of the Convention and our capacity to work hand-in-hand with civil society in addressing humanitarian concerns. Lithuania is convinced that a legally binding international

instrument to ban the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions, which cause unacceptable harm to civilians, will be negotiated without delay, preferably by the end of 2008.

The last CCW review cycle proved to be a remarkable success. The entry into force of the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War is certainly its most important achievement. States parties to the Protocol must now agree on the modalities for its implementation and start to put its provisions into practice without delay, thereby demonstrating its relevance and encouraging others to join. In our view, the results of the Preparatory Committee meetings and intersessional open-ended consultations are substantial, in particular the recommendations to develop a mechanism for consultation and cooperation and to establish two databases.

Other significant achievements of the third Review Conference are the adoption of the Plan of Action to promote universality of the Convention and the establishment of the CCW Sponsorship Programme. The Sponsorship Programme is designed to stimulate universalization and implementation of the Convention and cooperation. As a coordinating country of that programme, Lithuania invites all eligible countries affected by explosive remnants of war and mines to benefit from the offered support and calls on countries in a position to contribute to the Programme to do so.

Finally, we look forward to a new review cycle of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, which would start with the Biennial Meeting of States in 2008. The absence of an outcome document in 2006 did not bring the process to a standstill: engagement continues. Lithuania welcomes the report of the Group of Governmental Experts (see A/62/163), which recommends considering further steps to enhance international cooperation in preventing, combating and eliminating illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons and looks forward to the implementation of its recommendations.

Ms. Liufalani (New Zealand): Tuesday morning's panel discussion gave us an opportunity to acknowledge the enormous gains made over the past decade by the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. It also gave

us a chance to look at some of the remaining challenges.

States will need to work together in the lead-up to the second Review Conference to ensure that full implementation of the Convention is achieved. In particular, that will require close collaboration to assist those States experiencing challenges in working towards the completion of their mine-clearance deadlines. We are happy that thorough preparation work done on deadline extension procedures will ensure a transparent and cooperative process for the evaluation of any deadline extension requests. One of the other particularly welcome achievements over the past year has been the significant progress made on the Convention's universalization under Australia's presidency.

New Zealand is committed to supporting all aspects of the Convention's work and will serve as co-chair for victim assistance issues during 2008. Working with Cambodia, we look forward to building on the targeted programme for victim assistance commenced by Austria and the Sudan in collaboration with the Implementation Support Unit.

In this Committee last year, New Zealand was one of a few countries calling for urgent international action to address the humanitarian concerns posed by cluster munitions. The remarkable progress made on that issue during the course of 2007 has been very encouraging. In particular, the international process launched by the Oslo Declaration has engaged a large number of States, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations in a process geared to achieve a new convention on cluster munitions by the end of 2008. New Zealand has long advocated for seriously addressing concerns relating to the use and design of cluster munitions and is pleased to be part of the core group leading that effort. As part of the process towards the conclusion of an international instrument, New Zealand will host a meeting of the Oslo process in Wellington in February 2008.

We hope that progress on cluster munitions will also be possible within 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 (CCW) framework. We have been pleased to see a greatly increased level of engagement by CCW States over the past year on the issue of cluster munitions. There now

seems to be universal recognition that cluster munitions pose a specific humanitarian risk and that serious consideration must be given to ways to respond to that risk. We welcome all efforts towards an outcome that addresses the harm that cluster munitions cause to civilians.

As has already been mentioned, 5 November marks the welcome first Conference of the States Parties to Protocol V of the CCW, which deals with explosive remnants of war. New Zealand deposited its instrument of acceptance to Protocol V earlier this month and looks forward to participating in the first Meeting of the States Parties. Our acceptance of Protocol V underlines New Zealand's commitment to ending the post-conflict death, injury and suffering that result from the wide range of unexploded and abandoned ordnance that remain after hostilities have ended. In particular, States will need to work together to establish a database on Protocol V, including information relevant to clearance of explosive remnants of war, information exchange, protection of civilians and humanitarian organizations, and cooperation and assistance.

There have been some positive developments in the area of small arms and light weapons over the past few months that have helped to fill the gap created by the disappointing outcome of last year's Review Conference of the 2001 United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

We welcome the establishment of the Group of Governmental Experts to take work forward on the arms trade treaty initiative. New Zealand strongly supports the development of a global instrument that establishes robust and transparent norms in tackling the illicit and poorly regulated trade in conventional weapons. The large number of responses from States to the Secretary-General was unprecedented in scale and demonstrated broad recognition that the issues that the arms trade treaty initiative seeks to address are real and pressing problems in the global security environment.

The initiative by Canada to convene an informal meeting on transfer controls in August provided a useful opportunity to discuss the full range of national- and regional-level arrangements regulating the trade in small arms and light weapons. That meeting has helpfully shown that there is a degree of commonality

between regions on the broad principles that should guide decision-making on authorizations of arms transfers.

We are pleased that the next Programme of Action Biennial Meeting of States is scheduled for July 2008. Such meetings ensure that the global concerns posed by illicit small arms and light weapons can be tackled at the multilateral level. We must not squander the opportunity they present to us to address the practical challenges confronting the Programme of Action and its implementation.

We also welcome the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on brokering (see A/62/163), which has been submitted to this Committee. That report, which usefully provides a clear definition of what constitutes brokering, serves as a good basis for further work on strengthening national controls to guard against illicit brokering. We look forward to discussions at this session on taking forward the recommendations of the report.

New Zealand very much welcomed the announcement last week by the Russian Federation and the United States on further steps they are taking under the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-range and Shorter-range Missiles. We welcome the intention to multilateralize that Treaty and to bring in others. That is consistent with our view that a multilateral approach works most effectively in many instances. We also appreciate the fact that those two States chose the First Committee as the venue for making that announcement, which is appropriate given the important role of the Committee in dealing with disarmament and international security matters.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The thematic discussion on conventional weapons offers the delegation of Senegal an opportunity to present its views and concerns on this urgent subject, which is of such great importance for international security. Beyond the issue of the maintenance of international peace and security, the problem of conventional weapons highlights the question of the relationship between disarmament and development.

Indeed, as regards Africa, the suffering and loss of life caused by such weapons are recognized by all. Armed conflicts cost Africa billions of dollars every year, seriously compromising its development. Many of those conflicts could have been avoided had the worldwide flow of weapons been strictly regulated and

organized. The lack of common international rules on the import, export and transfer of conventional weapons has contributed to conflicts, the displacement of populations, crime and terrorism. It has thus affected peace, stability and sustainable development. Senegal therefore attaches great importance to the conclusion of the process that began in 2006 with the adoption of resolution 61/89, entitled "Towards an arms trade treaty". My country has already informed the Secretary-General of its views on this issue. We are prepared to contribute effectively to the emergence of consensus on this matter.

In that regard, the group of experts that will carry out this work in 2008 will have to bear a great responsibility and should constantly keep in mind the clearly expressed will of States manifested in the various reports already submitted to the Secretary-General. In line with those reports, it is important that the process thereby begun be transparent and inclusive — and that it include arms manufacturers, importers and exporters — so as to better carry out the clearly and widely expressed desire of Member States.

The process that should lead us to a treaty on the illicit trade in arms is not without obstacles. Senegal, which had the honour to participate in the work of the 2005 and 2006 Group of Experts — on the Register of Conventional Weapons and on Small Arms and Light Weapons, respectively — firmly supports the recommendations of both Groups, although much remains to be done. We encourage the 2008 Group to take those recommendations into consideration.

Moreover, my Government believes that the following elements are crucial to an effective and viable arms treaty. First, all conventional weapons should be included in an arms trade treaty, including ammunition. Secondly, it would be desirable to establish a definition of what constitutes transfers. Thirdly, the future treaty should include brokering activities. Fourthly, respect for international humanitarian and human rights norms should serve as the fundamental basis for the treaty. Fifthly, the strengthening of institutional capacities and international cooperation and assistance should also be at the heart of an arms trade treaty.

In its statement in the general debate, Senegal emphasized the special attention that should be paid to anti-personnel landmines and small arms and light weapons. With regard to the latter and with a view to

the work to be done in 2008, Member States should demonstrate firm political will in order to avoid the impending impasse. One of the main points of contention of the last United Nations Conference to review progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms had to do with determining the goal of the Review Conference: should it undertake a simple review of the Programme of Work or go further and consider how to improve the Programme. Senegal's position on the matter is clear. Problems revealed by assessments should be dealt with through efforts to improve the situation.

In addition to the contentious issue of the Conference's objective, Member States did also not agree on the substantive issues relating to regulating arms in civilian hands and the transfer of small arms and light weapons to non-State actors. That brief diagnosis of the root causes of the last Review Conference leads us to believe that any attempt at rectifying the situation should necessarily be based on a shared and firm political will to effectively combat the scourge of small arms and light weapons.

I cannot conclude without raising the problem of the non-authorized use of man-portable air defence systems. I call on all Member States to cooperate to ensure that such systems do not fall into the hands of non-State actors and terrorists or threaten civilian aviation.

Mr. Al-Shami (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General and the Secretariat for the documents and reports prepared in connection with this item, which my country has studied carefully. We also wish to thank all those who have made useful contributions, which will enrich our debate and lead us to the results to which we all aspire.

My delegation would like to emphasize the fact that the Republic of Yemen believes deeply in the objectives and goals of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We support all measures and efforts that will contribute to bringing about an end to the tragic consequences of the illicit spread and use of small arms and light weapons, especially their effects on children and their negative impact on the efforts of Member States to eradicate poverty and bolster sustainable development, social harmony, peace and stability.

My delegation has carefully studied the report (A/CONF.192/2006/RC/9) of the United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which was held in the summer of 2006. In that regard, my country has participated seriously in international efforts to prevent the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We are currently making vigorous efforts to control the acquisition of weapons and ban the carrying of weapons in our major cities. Yemen is also seriously attempting to control and confiscate firearms. In an attempt to eradicate this phenomenon, we have abolished all licenses issued previously allowing some persons to carry weapons.

My Government welcomes the June 2007 results of the work of the group of governmental experts charged with reviewing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We call for more serious efforts to constructively address this dangerous scourge, which has a direct impact on the security and social harmony of many societies and facilitates the availability of weapons to non-State actors, terrorists, transnational organized crime groups and other illegal groups. In the final analysis, all of that has a negative impact on development efforts, thereby entrenching poverty, backwardness, unemployment, contagious diseases and other factors that create an environment conducive to the rise to terrorist organizations, serve to widen the cycle of violence and bring about instability, with its negative impacts at the national and regional levels. All countries that manufacture those weapons therefore have a moral responsibility towards countries in which those weapons are dumped. We should not abandon those countries to face deteriorating economies and social instability.

Ms. Haoua (Niger) (*spoke in French*): It is a pleasure for the delegation of Niger to join others who have spoken before me to express our sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I likewise wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau. We assure you of our full cooperation as you carry out your tasks.

My delegation would like to associate itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of African States, as well as that made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of

the Non-Aligned Movement. I should therefore just like to make a few remarks.

Although it is true that humankind as a whole aspires to genuine peace, it is also true that the tragic events taking place in various parts of the planet serve once again to illustrate the need for full and complete disarmament. Niger, which is faithful to the noble ideals of international peace and security enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, has always worked towards genuine disarmament. I am pleased to say that my country has become party to most international instruments in that regard. In that connection, I should like to refer to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Treaty, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Niger also supports all efforts aimed at ensuring universal adherence to those instruments.

Niger welcomes the progress made in the field of nuclear disarmament. As mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General, the total number of nuclear weapons is at a 40-year low. That number is currently estimated to be 27,000. Nevertheless, even at such levels, the situation remains one of concern. The report also underscores the difficulties regarding transparency and the verification of nuclear weapons stockpiles and their reduction.

We welcome the restructuring of the Office for Disarmament Affairs to make it more effective in dealing with disarmament issues. I also warmly congratulate His Excellency Mr. Sergio Duarte on his appointment as High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

For international peace and security to prevail, all countries must resolutely commit themselves to substantial disarmament, because disarmament is the way in which to make the world a safer and more stable place. The stockpiling and transfer of small arms and light weapons fuels a number of conflicts, with serious consequences for international peace and security. This is a situation which challenges us all and calls on us to act vigorously to implement existing instruments.

This is why Niger, in cooperation with the United Nations and several neighbouring countries, has embarked on a fight against the scourge of the illicit trade in small arms. We must recall that in June 2006

States members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), including Niger, transformed the 1988 Moratorium into the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition, and Other Related Materials.

At the internal level, in addition to national legislation on the importation and possession of firearms, Niger established a national commission on the collection and control of illicit weapons in 1994. This commission, whose role is to eliminate the insecurity brought about by the flow and proliferation of small arms in Niger, has already attained significant results, as the United Nations Advisory Mission on the Proliferation of Light Weapons in the Saharo-Sahelian subregion has noted since March 1995. In this regard, 3,411 weapons were thus collected and destroyed in 1994 and 168 in 1995. These efforts continued after the Flame of Peace ceremony in September 2000, during which 1,243 weapons were destroyed.

Niger's defence and security policy is thus characterized above all by a tireless determination to establish good neighbourliness and peaceful coexistence with neighbouring countries and with all peace- and justice-loving countries, in keeping with the principles of the United Nations Charter.

Concluding a legally binding multilateral instrument to establish common international standards on the importation, exportation and transfer of conventional weapons would be extremely useful in maintaining and consolidating world peace and security. My country firmly supports this initiative, which is aimed at regulating the international arms trade and at fighting illicit trafficking.

Mr. Van Gucht (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time that my delegation has taken the floor, I would like at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee.

Belgium fully aligns itself with the position voiced by the representative of Portugal on behalf of the European Union, particularly concerning cluster munitions, whose humanitarian impact is now universally recognized. Experience has, unfortunately, demonstrated that the existing principles of international humanitarian law, although relevant, have not been enough to prevent the human tragedies caused by such weapons during and following conflicts. The proliferation of cluster munitions constitutes a source of concern. Belgium thus believes that the question of

cluster munitions must be urgently addressed at the international level.

For Belgium, the priority must be to rapidly begin negotiations with a view to agreement by the end of 2008 on a legally binding instrument that effectively responds to the humanitarian concerns brought about by cluster munitions. Such an instrument should also contain provisions on international cooperation and assistance. Belgium welcomes all initiatives towards this objective and will work actively to achieve concrete results benefiting the populations concerned as soon as possible.

In the context of the process set in motion in Oslo in February 2007, Belgium will therefore convene tomorrow, 30 October, in Brussels, the European Regional Conference on Cluster Munitions to discuss two important questions in depth: victim assistance and the stockpile destruction. Although this will not be a negotiating exercise, we hope that the Brussels discussions will contribute to harmonizing perspectives and consolidating the political consensus that seems to be gradually emerging on this question on the European continent as elsewhere.

The outcome of the Brussels Conference could contribute to the discussions which will take place in the coming weeks at various international gatherings where these subjects will be broached.

Ms. Vatne (Norway): Last month we celebrated the tenth anniversary of the Mine Ban Convention. The Convention has truly been innovative in forging partnerships across regional and political divisions and, not least, in involving all stakeholders. The active role played by civil society in the Mine Ban Convention has truly been instrumental for the success of the treaty. The Mine Ban Convention has set a fundamental norm which goes beyond the membership of the Convention. Yet, we urge those that have not joined the Convention to do so without delay. The Mine Ban Convention proves that multilateralism works and is truly an expression of the concept of disarmament as humanitarian action. Norway supports a United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research project to further develop this concept.

Norway is convinced that important lessons can be learned and inspiration derived from the Mine Ban Convention in addressing the issue of cluster munitions. For years, the humanitarian suffering caused by the use of cluster munitions has been a well

known and well documented problem. Despite several efforts made to address this issue in an effective way, it had not been possible to agree on a negotiating process.

Seeing the use of cluster munitions as an increasingly pressing humanitarian and development problem rather than simply as an arms control or disarmament issue, the Norwegian Government decided to initiate an international process with the objective of prohibiting cluster munitions causing unacceptable humanitarian and development harm. The Oslo Declaration spells out our commitment to negotiate, by the end of 2008, an international legal instrument that prohibits cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians. The process is a joint, open and inclusive undertaking by like-minded States, the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the Cluster Munitions Coalition and other civil society organizations.

The United Nations has recently urged all Member States to address immediately the horrendous effects of cluster munitions by concluding a legally binding instrument and has called on States to take domestic measures to immediately freeze the use and transfer of all cluster munitions until such a treaty is adopted. This United Nations call deserves a clear and adequate response from Member States. This is about people, communities and countries affected by the use and the remnants of the use of cluster munitions.

Combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects is fundamental to improving global, regional and national security as well as necessary social and economic development. Norway is a strong supporter of international efforts to achieve this goal, and cooperates with Governments and non-governmental organizations, based on the United Nations Programme of Action, within multilateral, regional and bilateral frameworks.

Norway has provided considerable financial support to various studies, workshops and capacity-building projects and to the implementation of regional declarations and protocols. In addition, Norway has financially supported the United Nations in assisting Member States to prepare and submit their national reports under the Programme of Action. Likewise,

Norway has for a number of years provided core funding for the Small Arms Survey.

Norway has been consistent in underlining that the Programme of Action needed to be further strengthened. In 2005, we welcomed the new Instrument on marking and tracing, although we would have preferred to see it legally binding.

Some years ago, Norway and the Netherlands took the initiative to highlight the need for more effective international cooperation in addressing the question of the brokering of small arms and light weapons. A conference on the subject was organized in Oslo on 23 and 24 April 2003 and laid the basis for several steps to promote international cooperation on illicit brokering.

Norway has advocated an international instrument against illicit brokering and participated in the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts, which was convened in 2006 and reported to the General Assembly at its current session (see A/62/163). We greatly appreciated the constructive way the Group of Governmental Experts was chaired, allowing for in-depth discussions of the challenges posed by illicit brokering. Although Norway had hoped for bolder recommendations, we welcome the fact that the Group managed to produce a consensus report. It is important that at the current session the General Assembly endorse the report and thus give impetus to active follow-up of the recommendations contained in the Group's report in the coming biennial meetings under the Programme of Action.

At the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, Norway enthusiastically supported resolution 61/89, calling for the start of a process with the aim of reaching an arms trade treaty. Norway looks forward to the outcome of the work of the Group of Governmental Experts that has been established to clarify the modalities of such a treaty. While Norway is not member of the Group, we have articulated our views to the Secretariat on how we envisage an arms trade treaty.

First, we are convinced that an arms trade treaty is feasible. Secondly, we recommend a broad scope, encompassing a list of equipment to be broadly based on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. We believe that certain dual-use items could also be relevant. Thirdly, a number of commitments already exist in relation to arms transfers. An arms trade treaty

must expand those parameters. From our perspective, they could include their relevance to terrorist activities; their relevance to violent and/or organized crime; their potential for destabilizing regions and/or countries; their potential for provoking or increasing internal and regional conflict; their potential for negatively affecting sustainable development; involvement in corrupt practices; their risk of being used for violations of international humanitarian or human rights law; transfers in breach of any international or regional commitment and/or obligation; and transfers being used for, or to facilitate, the uses referred to above. A new instrument would need to be supported by, for instance, mechanisms for information exchange, reporting and documentation, monitoring, compliance, assistance and cooperation. The negotiations would need to clarify how those elements are to be organized.

Before concluding, allow me to reiterate that Norway fully supports the efforts to deal with the challenges posed by man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS). MANPADS continue to pose a substantial threat to civil aviation. We must take all necessary national and international steps to prevent unauthorized access to or use of MANPADS, while preserving the right to possess MANPADS for legitimate defence purposes.

Mr. Briz Gutiérrez (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am making a statement on behalf of the countries members of the Central American Integration System — Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and the Dominican Republic — joined by Mexico.

Mine clearance operations around the world are vital for the people who live near places where mines have been placed. Anti-personnel mines cause immeasurable loss of human life every year and are a factor that impedes economic and social development in both urban and rural areas. They impede the use of fertile land for agriculture, and this in turn has a direct impact on the economy of developing countries.

Anti-personnel mines also have a humanitarian impact, with very serious and persistent consequences, which entail the need for sustained medical and socio-economic assistance to victims. Their elimination therefore constitutes a legal and moral obligation and a precondition for the development and reintegration of populations, especially those who live along borders where conflicts have taken place.

Our countries are aware of the serious threat posed by mines and other unexploded ordnance to the security, health and life of local civilians and personnel of peacekeeping operations and humanitarian and rehabilitation programmes.

During the conflicts of the 1980s and the early 1990s in the countries of the Central American region, thousands of anti-personnel mines were laid in those countries' territories. In 1991, at the initiative of Nicaragua, which was joined by other countries, Organization of American States (OAS) assistance was requested to initiate mine clearance activities. The OAS responded through the Central American Mine Clearance Assistance Programme, which has been financed by donor countries.

I would point out here that in May 2007 we celebrated the fifteenth anniversary of the Assistance Programme for Demining in Central America. That programme is currently known as the Comprehensive Action Programme against Antipersonnel Mines, since it has been expanded to include other brother countries in South America. The Programme supports mine clearance; promotes the education of the population on the risks posed by mines; grants assistance to victims; works on the socio-economic reintegration of previously mined areas; promotes the establishment of a database; and supports efforts to prohibit the production, use, sale, transfer and stockpiling of landmines. The OAS has been able to increase the mine-clearance capacity of affected countries by channelling international funds, equipment and trainers to affected areas.

For their part, brother countries from the region and donor countries have also supported mine clearance efforts in the region and, in particular, have contributed by sending specialized personnel and technical equipment for victim assistance and rehabilitation.

The Dominican Republic and Mexico, countries which have never been affected by the scourge of landmines, have always stood in solidarity with the countries of the region that have suffered from this scourge. They have promoted cooperation and assistance on mine clearance efforts.

The determination of our Governments to eradicate these lethal devices in our region and elsewhere in the world has been reiterated in various ways. One of those ways has been the ratification, by

all of our countries, of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, better known as the Ottawa Convention. That instrument establishes the highest standards for eliminating the scourge of anti-personnel mines, and it is making gradual progress towards universalization. Countries of the Central American region have taken an active part in the Meetings of the States Parties to the Convention, where we have shared our experiences and lessons learned. We take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, which will bear the high responsibility of organizing the eighth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention, which will take place in Amman in November.

We have also provided assistance to mine clearance personnel in other areas of the world, thus repaying, in part, the assistance that we have received from the international community for mine clearance in our countries. I would like to state that none of our countries have been or are producers of anti-personnel mines, and we have never exported mines to other States.

I will now speak about the achievements made in the countries I represent that have been affected by that scourge.

The problem of landmines in Nicaragua is the result of the war of external aggression waged against that country from 1981 to 1990. In the early 1990s, more than half a million Nicaraguans lived less than five kilometres from mined areas, where 135,643 landmines had been registered. Through the efforts of the Nicaraguan army, 33,386 mines have been discovered in recent years. That increase, along with operational delays due to the difficulty of access to those areas, has led Nicaragua several times to defer the estimated date for completion of demining on its territory.

However, in late 2006, Nicaragua achieved 92 per cent of its national demining plan, having cleared and certified 921 of the nearly 1,000 mined areas identified in that country. A gradual reduction in demining began in April 2007, with 154,808 mines destroyed as of 30 September this year. That task will continue until the end of 2008, when Nicaragua anticipates completing its demining activities.

The first States in which the OAS Mine Action Programme yielded results were Costa Rica and Honduras. Although no armed conflict took place on their territories, those countries were affected by the laying of anti-personnel landmines in their border areas. Costa Rica declared itself a mine-free territory in December 2002, and Honduras did so in October 2004. For its part, in January 2004 Belize introduced legislation to implement the Ottawa Convention. In late 2005, Guatemala declared that it had completely cleared all known areas of anti-personnel landmines. However, Guatemala decided to retain a small demining unit to respond in a timely and speedy manner to future notifications by the people with respect to the locale of possible mines or unexploded remnants.

El Salvador faced the serious problem that parts of its territory had been laid with mines and explosive remnants of war as a result of the internal armed conflict waged from 1980 to 1992. It has been estimated that, by the end of the conflict, 20,000 landmines had been laid in 425 minefields, covering an area of 436 square kilometres. There is currently no mine problem there.

Despite those achievements, we still face many challenges. The lack of adequate assistance for the physical rehabilitation and socio-economic reintegration of victims is a circumstance common to most countries of the region with a mine problem. Governments must make a greater commitment to caring for the survivors and to securing external support for them. Even once the last mines are cleared, the shadow of those weapons will continue to loom over the survivors until they are able to lead full and fruitful lives in their communities.

In conclusion, our countries feel that demining activities are essential to our efforts to strengthen peace in our region. We are ardent supporters of making the American continent a zone free of anti-personnel landmines. We will continue to work to that end and, with the support of the United Nations and the Organization of American States, to contribute to the achievement of the international community's objectives in that field.

Ms. Haile (Eritrea): Conventional weapons used recklessly and irresponsibly inflict no less harm and misery than do weapons of mass destruction. The proliferation of conventional weapons is a matter of

increasing concern because it has been the major instrument of destruction during the past few decades. The improvement in production technology and the sophistication and availability of limitless quantities of weapons are severely destabilizing, putting at risk peace, security and development, serving as a catalyst to armed conflict, supporting criminal activities and causing human suffering. The combination of irresponsibility, callousness and greed has not only caused massive destruction to life and property, but has also drained meagre financial resources that could have been used to combat poverty and famine and have destroyed the already fragile economies of and destabilized numerous countries.

The failure of the review conference of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects to agree on further measures to fully implement the Programme was of concern to Eritrea. Nevertheless, the forthcoming Biennial Meeting on implementation of the Programme of Action will provide an opportunity to renew the commitment and seek ways and further measures to strengthen its implementation and follow-up mechanism.

The meaningful implementation of the Programme can be achieved only if collective and individual action is taken at the international, regional and subregional levels. The Eritrean Government fully recognizes the necessity of regional, subregional and bilateral cooperation to terminate the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. To that end, it has consistently supported all initiatives and programmes in the Horn of Africa, including efforts within the Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States (RECSA). RECSA, where Eritrea is playing an active role, developed in the framework of the Nairobi Declaration on the Problem of the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa. Eritrea has also held continued consultations with like-minded States in the region and elsewhere. In that respect, my country welcomes the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on brokering activities, particularly illicit activities, relating to small arms and light weapons, including transportation agents and financial transactions.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Eritrea, as a party to the Convention, is fully committed to the total elimination of anti-personnel mines and unexploded ordnance. Eritrea is convinced that action must be taken to ensure the return of normalcy to the lives of our people and the people of the region.

Landmines are not only a security problem, but also a humanitarian one. Eritreans recognize, through their bitter experience of a 30-year war for independence and the recent border conflict with Ethiopia, that landmines are the sources of suffering and pain to many innocent civilians, especially the vulnerable members of society; divert scarce resources from development activities; and constitute major threats to political stability. Those silent killers have destroyed the lives of many innocent people. As a legacy of the wars, landmines and unexploded ordnance litter the countryside in many areas, continuing to cause injuries and deaths.

Due to that fact, my Government considers mine clearance action to be one of the highest priorities among activities for the rehabilitation and development of our nation. Eritrea embarked on a mine-clearing mission immediately after its liberation in 1991. In 1996, the Government established a national demining centre operated under the Ministry of Defence and consisting of a command unit, a research department, a demining training centre and one company of demining personnel. The centre has received bilateral expert assistance in planning, organizing, training and resourcing its humanitarian demining operations, particularly in developing a meaningful infrastructure capable of succeeding on its own. True to its tradition of self-reliance, Eritrea has also adopted a policy of ownership that would empower its agents to play a primary role in the planning and implementation of programmes and allow foreign donors to assist in the creation of structures, which underline the importance of capacity-building.

After the signing of the Algiers peace agreements with Ethiopia, the Eritrean Government established the Eritrean Demining Commission for the purpose of coordinating demining operations with the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea, which was

succeeded by the Eritrean Mine Action Programme, later succeeded by the Eritrean Demining Authority.

The objectives of the Eritrean Demining Authority are to eliminate the threat of mines and unexploded ordnance, facilitate the return of internally displaced persons to their villages, ensure the safe use of land and conduct other development activities. To that end, the Eritrean Demining Authority's activities have included developing a national mine action strategy plan on the basis of a landmine impact survey, establishing the legal and institutional framework for the participation of national and international non-governmental organizations and overseeing the strict adherence to and implementation of the Ottawa Convention.

I wish to conclude by reiterating Eritrea's full commitment to the establishment of a regional and international environment free of anti-personnel landmines. Eritrea is fully convinced that the struggle for the total elimination of landmines and unexploded ordnance must be waged at the regional and international levels to achieve any tangible results.

Mrs. Burkhardt-Remesar (Suriname): As this is the first time that I take the floor to speak in the First Committee, Mr. Chairman, I would like to congratulate you and your Bureau on your elections to guide the work of the Committee. I assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation.

The phenomenon of conventional weapons and their abuse poses an enormous danger to international peace and security, while also undermining stability, security and development. Hundreds of thousands of people are still suffering because of those weapons every year.

As part of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Suriname is one of the countries confronted with the uncontrolled illegal trade in small arms and light weapons in connection with drug trafficking and transnational organized crime. We therefore reaffirm the relevance of the implementation of the 2001 United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which contains recommendations for action at the national, regional and international levels. In that regard, we would like to inform the Committee that Suriname is making every effort to prevent the illicit

trade in small arms, while also emphasizing the regional contribution to global security.

Although Suriname does not manufacture conventional arms, those destructive weapons are available because they enter the country by legal and illegal means. My delegation therefore emphasizes the importance of restraining the development and potential use of conventional weapons. We stress the need for the adoption of a politically binding international instrument based on the principles of international law, international humanitarian law and the Charter of the United Nations, so as to eliminate the perilous illegal trade in all conventional weapons.

Almost every region of the world is affected by mines. Thousands of individuals are currently suffering as a result of those hidden weapons. We recognize the importance of implementing the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction — the Ottawa Convention. With its ratification of the Convention, in 2002, Suriname became an active participant in the Convention's implementation procedures. With the support and cooperation of the regional community, Suriname implemented article 5 of the Ottawa Convention and was able to clear the anti-personnel mines that were laid during the internal conflict in the 1980s. As of April 2005, Suriname has been declared mine-free.

Suriname reiterates its commitment to the full implementation of the Ottawa Convention. We shall continue to cooperate with regional and international organizations in that endeavour. Suriname believes in promoting the Ottawa Convention and its final goal, which is the worldwide banning of anti-personnel mines.

Furthermore, Suriname expresses the hope that the regional and international communities will demonstrate the necessary political will and flexibility and adhere to international obligations relating to the proliferation and illegal trafficking in small arms and light weapons, and other disarmament issues.

Ms. Terrazas Ontiveros (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): As this is the first time that I take the floor, allow me, Sir, to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament and International Security Committee. I should also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau, who assist you in your important task of guiding our work.

Bolivia fully supports the statement delivered on behalf of the Rio Group during the Committee's general debate. As an associated State of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR), we also associate ourselves with the statements made by the representative of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay in its capacity as President *pro tempore* of the Common Market of the South.

With the entry into force of the Charter of the United Nations and the Statute of the International Court of Justice, on 24 October 1945, our hopes were realized for an international organization with the aims of saving future generations from the scourge of war and promoting peace, justice, development and a better life for all humankind. More than six decades after the San Francisco Conference, the Organization has not relented in its efforts to achieve those goals.

Given the long-standing stalemate in the area of disarmament and international security, the treaty regimes in that field are essential instruments through which States can pledge their good faith and work to address and resolve their problems through cooperation and mutual benefit. Those regimes also serve to provide an institutional framework for international legal norms through periodic review conferences of States parties, as well as through bodies and mechanisms dedicated to the full and strict implementation of those instruments.

In the past 15 years, we have noted with concern a definite trend that has served to erode existing regimes and to create obstacles for the negotiation of new agreements. It has divided the international community and undermined its efforts to revitalize the field of disarmament and strengthen non-proliferation in all its aspects.

In some instances, conventional weapons are still being used to oppress or repress. In many other cases, they are used to kill or maim and to prompt the displacement of entire civilian populations terrorized by armed groups. The United Nations 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 (CCW), which covers a wide array of weapons, has the disadvantage of not strictly prohibiting such weapons; it merely limits them by restricting and regulating their use. Since 1992, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms has been the sole mechanism

devoted to international transfers to which States submit information on a voluntary basis. States indeed have the sovereign right to acquire weapons for their own security and to exercise the legitimate right of self-defence. But we also believe that military expenditures drain resources from the economic and social development programmes that are needed everywhere in the world, especially given the rapid approach of the deadline for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

The democratic and multilateral forum of the United Nations is the appropriate place to seek solutions to the multifaceted problem of the illicit trade and uncontrolled circulation of small arms and light weapons and of their devastating humanitarian and socio-economic consequences. In that connection, Bolivia would like to reiterate that it is essential to adopt international legal agreements on the transfer of conventional weapons in order to prevent, among other things, illegal brokering, thereby strengthening the preventive measures set out in part II of the Programme of Action.

The Government of President Evo Morales seeks to promote a culture of life, rather than a culture of war. Unilateral intervention destroys civilizations and peoples and kills millions of innocent human beings. Military colonialism destroys natural fonts of energy. Its victims include millions of defenceless women, children and older persons. The arrogance of military power only generates further violence. Bolivia calls on the international community to heed the wisdom of peoples and of the social organizations of countries, which are the repositories of knowledge and know-how, so as to promote life and save the planet.

Bolivia has ratified nearly every multilateral treaty in the areas of disarmament and international security. On the regional level, we are a party to the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials. At the domestic level, we continue to pursue the adoption of a law on weapons and ammunition and explosives and dual-use chemical agents.

My delegation looks forward with interest to the recommendations of the group of governmental experts that will begin its work in 2008 with a mandate to examine the viability, reach and scope of a wide-ranging and legally binding draft instrument to set

common international norms on the import, export and transfer of conventional weapons.

We are grateful for the interest and positive response of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development, which is based in Lima, in connection with our request for technical assistance. The first phase of that assistance resulted in a visit to La Paz at the end of August 2007.

Lastly, my delegation would also like to thank the Secretariat for its timely submission of the various reports in connection with the relevant resolutions of the First Committee.

Mr. Sagindikov (Kazakhstan) (*spoke in Russian*): In recent years, the United Nations has increased its efforts to eradicate the illicit trade in conventional weapons. We welcome those efforts, including the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Kazakhstan was one of the sponsors of the General Assembly resolution at that time.

Kazakhstan provides annual information on transfers of conventional weapons to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, which should, we believe, be strengthened further. As a member State of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), we have supported the OSCE document on small arms and light weapons and, since 2002, have provided OSCE with annual reports on our exports and imports of small arms. We also welcome such initiatives as the European Union's code of conduct regarding conventional weapons and the conclusion of a comprehensive agreement to ban the illegal trade in weapons. The General Assembly resolution adopted in December 2006 on the drafting of an international treaty on the arms trade aimed at establishing common international standards on the import, export and transfer of conventional weapons. We understand developing such a treaty is a very ambitious project that requires protracted diplomatic efforts and painstaking work. We must be fully aware of the entire complexity of this process and provide full support to further this initiative.

The problem posed by the destabilizing accumulation and proliferation of arms is one of the key problems encountered in ensuring stability and security throughout the world. Experience has shown that similar problems can only be solved through joint

cooperative efforts by States by strengthening their national export control systems and combating corruption. In that regard, I should like to point out that Kazakhstan's legislation regarding arms control is continuously being strengthened. The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is being controlled by means of national legislation that is in line with the Programme of Action adopted in New York in 2001.

In order to prevent the illegal trade in weapons, the competent authorities in Kazakhstan have been investigating storage facilities for weapons and explosive materials. In cooperation with law enforcement authorities of neighbouring States, we are working to detect and eliminate smuggled weapons, explosive devices and explosive materials.

In that connection, the Communiqué adopted by Central Asian States at the United Nations regional conference on the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons, which was held from 16 to 18 March in Almaty, made it possible to strengthen practical cooperation among Central Asian countries. That document was published as an official document of the General Assembly and Security Council under the symbol A/56/763.

The small arms and light weapons used at present by the armed forces of Kazakhstan, as well as the associated military supplies, are mainly of Soviet production and are marked accordingly. The new types of weapons being adopted by our armed forces bear markings of the producer firm. All arms and light weapons, as well as the military supplies associated with them, are being inventoried and annual inventories are being issued, along with scheduled and unscheduled checks of stores.

The Kazakh delegation has, on several occasions, raised the question as to whether it would be useful to establish an international monitoring system to control the movement of small arms and light weapons. However, as we have stated in the past, this would require, as a first step, the establishment of detailed uniform national databases by States. Then we could proceed to strengthening cooperation between neighbouring States, then move up to the regional level and further.

The overall security of Asian States in connection with the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons is hampered significantly by the length of our borders, which makes it rather difficult to control them fully. In

that regard, it is vitally important for our States to strengthen border cooperation. To that end, the security services and law enforcement authorities of our countries should regularly exchange information on criminal organizations and persons who are active in the illicit small arms trade. Experience has shown that they use the same transportation routes, techniques and methods and the same groups of associates and informers. The timely revelation and exchange of such information will help to erect a barrier to such criminal activities that threaten the stability and security of the region.

Mr. Kang Yong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At present, the international security situation is far from tranquil. The peace, stability and development of entire countries and regions are seriously affected by regional conflicts and prominent non-traditional security threats, such as terrorism and transnational organized crime. Those threats have been aggravated by the illicit transfer and misuse of conventional weapons. It is an important and urgent task of the international community to take concrete measures to promote arms control in the field of conventional weapons.

The Chinese Government has always firmly supported and actively participated in conventional arms control processes at the international level. China supports the ongoing enhancement and further improvement of conventional arms control mechanisms, provided that they not prejudice the sovereignty and security of all countries, so as to address humanitarian concerns caused by conventional arms and promote international peace and security.

The Chinese Government attaches great importance to the issue of military transparency and has made unremitting efforts to increase such transparency and improve mutual trust with other countries. Beginning this year, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, the Chinese Government has decided to report annually to the Secretary-General on basic data pertaining to its military expenditures for the latest fiscal year. That is a significant step on the part of China to further enhance its military transparency. That fully demonstrates that China is committed to improving mutual trust with other countries in the military field.

China also attaches importance to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and has made important contributions to the establishment and

development of the Register. Following the Register's establishment, China has annually provided the Secretary-General with data on its imports and exports of conventional arms in the seven categories covered by the Register. However, since 1996, a certain country has provided the Register with data on its arms sales to the Taiwan province of China. That contradicts the spirit of the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the objectives and principles of the Register. China was therefore compelled to suspend its reporting to the Register. Now that the country concerned has stopped that behaviour, beginning this year, the Chinese Government has decided to resume providing the Register annual data on imports and exports of conventional arms in the seven categories.

Those two decisions of the Chinese Government demonstrate that China supports the important role played by the United Nations in promoting transparency in armaments and mutual trust in the field of security among countries. China stands ready to make joint efforts with other members of the international community to continuously enhance the universality and effectiveness of the United Nations System for the Standardized Reporting of Military Expenditures and the Register of Conventional Arms.

Since the entry into force of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), the CCW process has maintained great vitality and played an important role in addressing the humanitarian concerns caused by certain conventional weapons such as landmines. China strictly observes its obligations under the CCW Convention and its Protocols and actively participates in the relevant work within the framework of the CCW. China supports the final declaration and decisions adopted by the third CCW Review Conference. In order to provide financing to least-developed countries so that they can participate in the CCW process, China has provided donations to the Sponsorship Programme this year. China remains committed to enhancing the universality and effectiveness of the CCW.

The conclusion and entry into force of Protocol V, on Explosive Remnants of War, constitute an important contribution to the international arms control and the humanitarian cause. China welcomes the entry into force of the Protocol and is actively preparing for early ratification.

The issue of cluster munitions has become one of the prominent issues in the field of conventional arms control, including in the framework of the CCW. China understands the humanitarian concerns of the international community on that issue and favours finding a proper solution to it within the framework of the CCW, based on the principle of consensus and addressing the humanitarian concerns and military needs of all countries in a balanced manner.

China attaches great importance to the implementation of the Amended Protocol II, on mines. In order to ensure the full and timely implementation of the Protocol, China has made great efforts in the areas of the technical modification of anti-personnel landmines, the destruction of old or obsolete mines, the training of personnel and the raising of public awareness. In September, China submitted for the first time its annual report on the implementation of the CCW Convention, in accordance with the decision of the third CCW Review Conference. As usual, China has also submitted on time its annual report on the implementation of Amended Protocol II, on mines. China also understands the humanitarian concerns caused by the indiscriminate use of anti-vehicle landmines. China is ready to work with other parties to explore effective ways to address the issue with a pragmatic and constructive attitude.

China is committed to promoting international demining cooperation and, within its capabilities, has provided assistance to relevant mine-affected countries. Thus far, the Chinese Government has provided demining assistance to more than 10 countries in Asia and Africa through various means, including financial donations, the provision of demining equipment and personnel training courses. This month, October, China will host a demining training course in Nanjing for personnel from five African countries, namely, Angola, Burundi, Chad, Guinea-Bissau, and Mozambique. China will also donate demining equipment to those countries.

China has always been committed to promoting the full and effective implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. China welcomes the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons (see A/62/163), which is an important achievement by the international community in combating the illicit trade in those

weapons. The Chinese governmental expert played a constructive role in the work of the Group.

The third Biennial Meeting of States on small arms and light weapons will be held next year. China is ready to cooperate with other parties in achieving a successful outcome to the meeting so as to further strengthen international efforts in combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

China has always taken a prudent and responsible attitude in its arms exports and has exercised strict controls over arms exports, in accordance with its international obligations and its domestic laws and regulations. China has always observed the following three principles in its arms exports: the exports should be conducive to the legitimate self-defence capability of the recipient country; the exports should not undermine the peace, security and stability of the region concerned or the world as a whole; and the exports should not be used to interfere in the internal affairs of the recipient country. China also makes explicit and strict requirements regarding the end-users of exported arms. Recipient countries are not allowed to transfer arms imported from China to any third country without China's consent.

China supports the efforts by the international community to enhance cooperation in the area of combating illicit arms trafficking. However, such cooperation should not affect regular and lawful arms transfers among countries or infringe upon the legitimate right of all countries to self-defence. The issue of the trade in arms is complex, and situations in various countries and regions differ widely. Whether it is necessary to negotiate an international instrument concerning the arms trade and how to deal with the relationship between such an instrument and existing principles and mechanisms on conventional arms transfers should be considered in a comprehensive manner and dealt with on the basis of the universal participation of the international community.

The Chairperson (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Germany to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/62/L.33.

Mr. Brasack (Germany): As this is the first time that I take the floor in a formal meeting, I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to your high office and for your excellent steering of the session thus far. I

should also like to extend my congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

Clearly, Germany endorses the statement on the issue of conventional arms read out at the 19th meeting by the representative of Portugal on behalf of the European Union.

I have the pleasure to introduce the biennial draft resolution entitled "Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures", contained in document A/C.1/62/L.33. I would like to take this opportunity to thank those nations that have for the first time sponsored our consensus draft resolution this year, bringing the number of sponsors so far to more than 65 countries. Let me encourage those delegations that are still considering becoming sponsors to do so.

The German-Romanian biennial draft resolution before the First Committee is, on the one hand, a follow-up to the 2005 version, with some minor technical amendments; on the other hand, paragraph 5 includes a new element concerning the proposal to establish a group of governmental experts in 2010. Let me continue with some general remarks about the operational side of the draft resolution.

Since the adoption, in 2005, of resolution 60/45, the level of submissions by States to the System for the Standardized Reporting of Military Expenditures has remained relatively stable, following the same patterns seen in recent years. In 2006, 82 submissions were received — the highest number since 2002. The same level of submissions may be achieved in 2007, as some late submissions are expected.

Sustained efforts are being made by the Office for Disarmament Affairs to increase familiarity and attain greater and more consistent participation, by promoting the reporting instrument worldwide and the transparency of military expenditures at the regional level. Notably, it presented background papers to the Organization of American States at the plenary session of its Hemispheric Security Committee in November 2006, and to the seventh Conference of Defence Ministers of the Americas, held in Nicaragua in October 2006. Last year, the Office for Disarmament Affairs posted an electronic booklet on its website entitled "Guidelines for reporting military expenditures to the United Nations standardized instrument". This year, another electronic booklet of historical interest has been posted, which deals with the transparency of

military expenditures under the system established by the League of Nations, the predecessor to the United Nations. Allow me to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude for those important and sustained efforts of the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

Three Members participated in the reporting system for the first time during the past two years, namely, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Tajikistan in 2006 and the People's Republic of China in 2007, as the representative of China just mentioned. As a result, a total of 124 States have thus far participated in the United Nations reporting instrument at least once. The standardized reporting format covers expenditures on personnel, operations and maintenance, procurement and construction and research and development. Allow me to appeal to all countries that have not yet participated to join the instrument by submitting information next year.

Let me now explain the reasons for the proposal to establish a group of governmental experts to review the operation and further development of the standardized instrument for reporting military expenditures. Notwithstanding the dramatic changes in the international framework, the Reporting System has remained almost unaltered since its introduction in 1981. Thus far, there has only been only one preliminary review of the reporting system, undertaken by a group of governmental experts in 1982, although that group recommended that a further review should be undertaken in a few years' time, once Member States had more experience with the new reporting system. In our view, the time has now come. The present reporting system may have a number of weaknesses that make it considerably more difficult to compare and assess the reported data in a user-friendly way. Important supplementary data — for example, defence expenditures as a proportion of total budget and gross domestic product, rates of inflation and budget estimates for the following years — are not collected. A certain level of assessment of the data provided could also be useful. A review should also address the question of how participation in the reporting system could be broadened further.

Worldwide military expenditures have increased continuously since 1999. From 2001 to 2005 alone, the increase was an estimated 25.1 per cent. The funds spent in this area are lacking in other areas of public expenditure.

There is no reliable data on military expenditures for a number of countries. A fully updated United Nations reporting system on military expenditures could provide the internationally accepted information basis needed to contribute to transparency and confidence-building. The United Nations should therefore devote greater attention to the subject of military expenditures. The establishment of a group of governmental experts on this issue would send a clear message.

What would the mandate of such a group look like? What are the possible goals? Let me briefly highlight some. Goals could include the review of the procedures, operation and efficiency of the reporting system, including an assessment of the questionnaire; proposals to facilitate greater and more constant participation, including an investigation into barriers to State participation; recommendations for further improvement of the reporting system, including proposals for an improved and even more user-friendly questionnaire, possibly with additional criteria, in order to collect reliable and more comparable data; the consideration of ways to improve the form and operation of the reporting system, for example the establishment of an electronic database and prompt entering of reports into it; the consideration of the possible introduction of some annual assessment of the reports, as well as enhanced public information by the Secretariat about the data obtained through the reporting system; and requirements for the Secretariat to operate and maintain the reporting system.

Let me again appeal to those States that have only participated once or just a few times to participate on a consistent basis. Consistency alone will significantly raise the level of participation each year, thereby contributing to the common goal of transparency in these important matters. I express the hope that draft resolution will once again be adopted by consensus.

Before I conclude my statement, allow me briefly to touch upon the United States-Russia initiative for universalizing the Treaty on Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF). Germany welcomes the initiative presented by Russia and the United States at the First Committee on Thursday, 25 October 2007, for the global abolishment of all land-based short- and medium-range missiles. Such multilateralization of the INF Treaty, which currently applies to the United States and Russia, would represent an important step in promoting nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Such a step would be completely in line with Germany's stated aims in the field of disarmament. We share the concerns expressed by Russia and the United States with respect to the increasing proliferation of missiles and view their initiative as an important contribution to strengthening the international multilateral cooperative non-proliferation regime. Germany will fully support this Russia-United States initiative.

The conclusion of the INF Treaty, in 1987, was a milestone in international disarmament efforts. It has been a major contributing factor in reducing the tensions between the two former alliance systems. Following the end of the cold war, it remains one of the pillars in the global, and in particular the European, security architecture. Germany therefore attaches great importance to maintaining the present INF Treaty, as well as to the development of a multilateral instrument.

The Chairperson (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan, who will introduce draft resolutions A/C.1/62/L.31, A/C.1/62/L.42, A/C.1/62/L.43 and A/C.1/62/L.44.

Mr. Khalilullah (Pakistan): I take the floor to make a statement on conventional weapons and to introduce four draft resolutions, contained respectively in documents A/C.1/62/L.31, A/C.1/62/L.42, A/C.1/62/L.43 and A/C.1/62/L.44.

In my intervention, I will touch on the subjects of conventional weapons, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and the proposed arms trade treaty.

Pakistan is committed to the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which was adopted in 2001. We have submitted two comprehensive national reports that lay out in detail our national policy framework and actions for the implementation of the Programme of Action. A system of marking, tracing and record-keeping exists in Pakistan. Records are kept permanently.

However, the increasing focus on small arms and light weapons tends to divert the international community's attention from the regulation and reduction of conventional arms and armed forces. Overemphasis on small arms eclipses the salience of sophisticated conventional weapons and technology

being traded in huge quantities around the world. Profit-motivated trade in combat aircraft, aircraft carriers, airborne and early-warning and control systems, missile defence, nuclear submarines and warships disrupts regional balances and escalates tensions. Such trade flourishes in a moral vacuum.

In 1978, the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I) characterized global military expenditures as a colossal waste of resources and called for reductions in such spending and reinvestment of resources into efforts to fight poverty and improve the human condition. By comparison, in 2006 the global military expenditures, exceeding \$1.2 trillion, were staggering. In percentage terms, it was about 2.5 per cent of the world's gross domestic product, or \$1.73 per capita. The United Nations, which is mandated to maintain international peace and security, has a budget that is less than 1.5 per cent of the world's military expenditures.

Developing countries are the favoured destination for arms sales. New markets are being explored, created and sought after. The total value of international arms transfers agreements during the period 2001 to 2004 was \$131 billion. Developing countries accounted for 63.2 per cent of all international arms deliveries.

Globalized arms production and sales ignore the grave humanitarian, political and strategic consequences of the proliferation of conventional weapons. Arms sellers encourage all sides in a conflict to buy more weapons. Some of them see conflict situations as a unique selling opportunity.

Recent studies have shown that asymmetries in conventional armaments in conflict areas drive military spending and promote insecurity. It is therefore imperative that we pursue conventional arms control, at the lowest possible levels of armaments and military forces, in order to promote regional and international peace and security. The preservation of a balance in the defence capabilities of States at the lowest levels or armaments should be the prime objective of conventional arms control.

SSOD-I gave this clear direction: together with negotiations on nuclear disarmament measures, negotiations should be carried out on the balanced reduction of forces and of conventional armaments, based on the principle of undiminished security of the parties, with a view to promoting or enhancing stability

at a lower military level, taking into account the need of all States to protect their security. In that regard, we can adapt and follow good practices. The value of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), a cornerstone of European security, cannot be overemphasized. States with larger military capabilities have a special responsibility in promoting such agreements for regional security.

We must step up efforts to curb the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of conventional weapons, as well as their uncontrolled transfer. Conventional arms control must address the root causes of insecurity emanating from disputes, conflicts and threat perceptions and seek to promote balance among regional States. We need to follow up such affirmations with concrete action.

First, the Office for Disarmament Affairs can analyse the data on arms transfers and help States develop benchmarks for conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels. The Register of Conventional Arms and the standardized instrument by themselves will not lead to limitations in arms transfers. They should be used not only for reporting but also as a means to develop a global norm towards transparency in armaments. The data extrapolated from those instruments can serve as a significant early warning mechanism, contributing to the prevention of conflict and the exercising of restraint in arms exports.

Secondly, the Conference on Disarmament can consider the formulation of principles that can serve as a framework for regional agreements on conventional arms control. A stable balance of conventional forces is necessary to ensure strategic stability, particularly in regions riven by tensions. The massive induction of sophisticated weaponry accentuates conventional asymmetries and compels greater reliance on nuclear and missile deterrence in the regions that have such capabilities.

We believe that conventional arms control needs to be pursued primarily in the regional and subregional contexts, as most threats to peace and security arise mainly in States located in the same region or subregion, and as aggressive expansion of arms acquisition by one country can jeopardize efforts to promote peace and stability in a region.

In South Asia, we are pursuing a strategic restraint regime that has three interlocking elements: conflict resolution, nuclear and missile restraint, and

conventional balance. Even as we sustain dialogue to address outstanding issues and work towards strategic stability and nuclear risk reduction, we will continue to strive for a conventional balance at the lowest possible level of armaments. In the interest of peace and security in South Asia, there must be restraint both in the demand and the supply of conventional weapons.

With regard to the CCW Review Conference, four developments related to the CCW deserve recognition. First, the 2003 Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War entered into force. Secondly, an agreement was reached to establish a compliance mechanism that would be supported by a pool of experts. Thirdly, a plan of action was agreed upon to promote universality. And, fourthly, agreement was reached on a Sponsorship Programme to facilitate the participation of least developed countries in CCW-related activities.

Differences remain on anti-vehicle mines, particularly in the areas of detectability, active life, the recording and removal of minefields, and the categorization of fuses and sensors. We are of the view that the CCW Convention and its five Protocols adequately address humanitarian aspects of mines, including anti-vehicle mines.

On cluster munitions, Pakistan supports a balanced solution, within the framework of the CCW Convention, that addresses both the humanitarian and security concerns of States. We would welcome movement towards regulating the use of cluster munitions.

On the issue of an arms trade treaty, the proposal for such a treaty requires careful consideration and calibration. First and foremost, the proposed group of governmental experts should reflect all views and perspectives. Second, the group's deliberations should develop a sharp understanding of such issues as the nature of the legally binding principles, irresponsible transfers and the application of human rights and humanitarian law to the arms treaty. In fact, one should have a clear idea of what constitutes illicit or illegal transfer. Third, the process of considering the treaty should be non-discriminatory, multilateral and transparent. Fourth, maximum attention should be given to defining the scope of such a treaty, including the types of weapons and spares. Fifth, both the production and trade in armaments should be addressed. Sixth, the preservation of balance in the defence capabilities of States at the lowest level of

armament should be the aim. Seventh, before rushing to the issues of monitoring, verification and sanctions regimes, the international community should address the question of conventional imbalances in regions of tension. Asymmetry is a recipe for conflict, an arms race and an arms build-up.

I should now like to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Regional disarmament", which is contained in document A/C.1/62/L.31. This draft resolution is being presented on behalf of the delegations of Bangladesh, Colombia, Ecuador, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Kuwait, Liberia, Malaysia, Nepal, Peru, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Turkey and Pakistan.

In order to ensure global security and disarmament, it is imperative to pursue efforts at the international and regional levels. Regional measures are, however, the building blocks of international security. The requisite guidelines and recommendations for regional approaches to disarmament within the context of global security adopted by the Disarmament Commission in 1993 provide the direction towards, and useful inputs for, the realization of the objectives of achieving disarmament at the regional level. Those guidelines remain relevant in the present day for the promotion of regional disarmament, in both the conventional and non-conventional fields.

It is quite evident that in most areas of tension and potential conflict — the Middle East, South Asia, North-East Asia and Central Asia — the regional approach could offer a most effective basis to promote disarmament, and thus enhance security. First, the draft resolution that my delegation has presented takes note of recent proposals for disarmament at the regional and subregional levels. Secondly, it expresses the conviction that endeavours to promote regional disarmament enhance the security of all States. Those endeavours take into account the specific characteristics of each region and the principle of undiminished security at the lowest level of armaments. Thirdly, it affirms that global and regional approaches to disarmament complement each other. Fourthly, the draft resolution calls on States to conclude agreements wherever possible. Fifthly, it welcomes the initiatives towards disarmament, non-proliferation and security undertaken by some countries at the regional and subregional levels. And, sixthly, it supports and encourages confidence-building measures. In order to achieve those objectives, we need

sustained efforts, and the draft resolution stresses that point.

We believe that the adoption of this draft resolution should encourage the countries concerned to step up endeavours aimed at regional disarmament. Its adoption should also help to strengthen regional and international security. The sponsors and my delegation hope that, as in the case of last year's text, the draft resolution will be adopted without a vote.

I will now introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/62/L.42, entitled "Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels", on behalf of the delegations of Bangladesh, Belarus, Egypt, Italy, Liberia, Malaysia, Nepal, Peru, Spain, the Syrian Arab Republic, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine and my own delegation.

The preservation of a balance in the defence capabilities of States at the lowest level of armament contributes to peace and stability. This draft resolution therefore aims to promote disarmament endeavours in the area of conventional disarmament at the regional and subregional levels. Although obviously important, this issue has not received the attention and support it deserves. We need a sharp focus on conventional balance and arms control.

In its preamble, the draft resolution outlines several principles and precepts. Those include: the crucial role of arms control in the areas of peace and security; the threats to peace in the post-cold-war era, arising mainly among States located in the same region or subregion; the objective of agreements to strengthen peace and security at the lowest possible level of armaments and military forces; the special responsibility of the militarily significant States and States with larger military capabilities to promote such agreements for regional peace and security; and the objectives of preventing the possibility of a military attack launched by surprise and of avoiding aggression.

The preamble of the draft resolution also notes with particular interest the initiatives taken in various regions, including a number of Latin American countries, and the proposals for conventional arms control in South Asia. It also recognizes the relevance and value of the CFE Treaty in Europe, which is described as a cornerstone of European security.

The operative part of the draft resolution decides to give urgent consideration to the issue of conventional disarmament at the regional and subregional levels and requests the Conference on Disarmament to consider formulating principles that can serve as the framework for regional agreements. It also requests the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States and submit a report to the General Assembly at its next session.

The sponsors look forward to the Committee's strong support for the draft resolution.

I will now introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/62/L.43, entitled "Confidence-building measures in the regional and subregional context", on behalf of Bangladesh, Colombia, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Sierra Leone, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine and Pakistan.

While the Charter of the United Nations designates the maintenance of peace and security at the global level as the primary responsibility of the international community, in practice tensions at the regional and subregional levels constitute the main source of instability. Those tensions contribute to the arms race, not only endangering international peace and security but also undermining efforts aimed at arms control and disarmament. Consequently, a spiralling arms race, particularly in regions of tension and conflict, obstructs the peaceful settlement of disputes, rendering their resolution even more difficult, widening poverty and spreading despair and anger.

Another reason that encouraged my delegation to introduce the draft resolution is the availability of an overwhelming body of evidence that clearly establishes that the initiation of such confidence-building measures in tension-ridden regions has paid tangible dividends for peace. By lowering tensions through confidence-building measures and the peaceful settlement of disputes, States can devote their resources and energies to the socio-economic advancement of their peoples. Such an approach could also supplement efforts at arms control and disarmament, as most threats to peace and security in the post-cold-war era arise among States located in the same region or subregion.

Regional arms races are the bane of development. The acquisition of military arsenals beyond legitimate security requirements is the prime cause of economic

debility in several parts of the world. There exists a symbiotic link between conflict and underdevelopment, and between war and poverty. That insidious relationship must be broken, in order to put an end to the suffering of vast segments of mankind. Regional arms races must stop, through the achievement of security at the lowest level of armament. Accordingly, a combination of political and military confidence-building measures could help to strengthen peace and security, and also encourage regions of tension to take measures towards arms control and disarmament.

The draft resolution is representative of the aspirations of a wide segment of the international community. It highlights several aspects of confidence-building measures: first, the adoption of confidence-building measures by States locked in territorial and other disputes in order to prevent armed conflict, through either bilateral, subregional or regional dialogue; secondly, the renunciation of the use or the threat of use of force and the reaffirmation of the Charter principles listed under Chapter VI, which may facilitate the pacific settlement of disputes among States; thirdly, the development of confidence-building measures that encourage the maintenance of military balance among regional States in the acquisition, development and deployment of various weapons systems; and, fourthly, the elaboration of confidence-building measures to strengthen peace along borders, to avoid conflict and prevent the unintended or accidental outbreak of hostilities, particularly in new theatres of crisis.

The preamble of the draft resolution reiterates the basic purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, as well as of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions relating to the prevention of armed conflicts. It recognizes the need for peaceful dialogue in regions of tension in order to avert conflict. And it welcomes the peace processes already initiated in various regions to resolve disputes through peaceful means, bilaterally or through mediation by third parties. It also recognizes that regions that have already developed confidence-building measures at the bilateral, subregional and regional levels in the political and military fields, including arms control and disarmament, have greatly improved the climate of peace and security in their regions and have contributed to the improvement of the socio-economic conditions of their peoples.

The operative paragraphs of the draft resolution call upon Member States to refrain from the use or threat of use of force, reaffirm the commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes under Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations, call upon Member States to open consultations and dialogue in regions of tension and conflict, without preconditions, and urge strict compliance with the bilateral, regional and international arms control and disarmament agreements to which contending States are parties.

The draft resolution also urges the maintenance of military balance in regions of tension in the acquisition of weapons systems and encourages the promotion of bilateral and regional confidence-building measures to avoid conflict and prevent the unintended and accidental outbreak of hostility. The draft resolution also requests the Secretary-General to consult regional States and ascertain their views, with a view to promoting confidence-building measures in regions of tension.

My delegation believes that the draft resolution serves as a platform for all regions of tension and conflict by encouraging States to address their disputes in a peaceful manner and to avoid the spectre of war and destruction. Therefore, my delegation and the other sponsors hope that the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/62/L.43 will be adopted with the full consent of the Committee.

The Chairperson (*spoke in French*): As there are still some 20 speakers left, and as we must suspend the meeting soon in order to hold a ceremony for the awarding of Disarmament Fellowship certificates, I ask the representative of Pakistan to kindly conclude his statement.

Mr. Khalilullah (Pakistan): I have just one more draft resolution to introduce, which is contained in document A/C.1/62/L.44 and is entitled "Conclusion of effective international arrangements to assure non nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons". I am introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the delegations of Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Colombia, Cuba, Egypt, El Salvador, Ghana, Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Liberia, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Myanmar, Peru, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, the Syrian Arab Republic, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam, Zambia and Pakistan.

At the end of the cold war, there was a general expectation that it would become easier for nuclear-weapon States to extend nuclear security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States. Unfortunately, instead of becoming easier, the situation has become more complex. That is so for several reasons. First, the Charter obligates nations not to use or threaten to use force. That obligation extends to nuclear weapons. The right to self-defence in this context is not unrestricted. The application of international humanitarian law requires proportionality of response in armed conflicts, as regards both conventional and strategic weapons.

I have two pages of text remaining, which I thought I would be able to read out. However, in the interests of time, which is very limited, I will just read out the final paragraph.

The sponsors believe that the conclusion of effective arrangements on negative security assurances could constitute a major confidence-building measure in the current tense international circumstances between nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States, as well as among nuclear-weapon States. Secondly, it could contribute to reducing nuclear danger, ease threats that arise from the new doctrines of nuclear use and facilitate the negotiations on other matters related to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The Chairperson (*spoke in French*): I ask the forgiveness of the other speakers, but I must stop the list here because we will hold a ceremony shortly. We shall try to hear the remaining speakers tomorrow.

I should now like to provide members with some details as to the organization of our two meetings tomorrow. During the decision-taking phase, the Committee will take action on draft resolutions and draft decisions in accordance with the unofficial working paper that the Secretariat has distributed. That paper includes the list of draft resolutions on which we are ready to take action, broken down by cluster; the voting too will take place by cluster. With the cooperation of all delegations and in line with past practice in this regard, I intend to move as efficiently as possible from one cluster to another.

Nevertheless, in following that procedure, the Committee will retain a certain level of flexibility in all things. I intend to follow the precedents established by the Committee, especially last year, in the taking of decisions on all draft resolutions. Hence, during this

stage, delegations will still be able to introduce draft resolutions under the various clusters. I ask members intending to introduce draft resolutions to be as brief as possible during the coming stage of our work, as time and the remaining meetings are limited.

Moreover, delegations wishing to do so may make general statements or comments other than explanations of vote related to the cluster being considered. Delegations will also be able to explain their votes or positions in a single intervention on all draft resolutions and draft decisions under the cluster being considered, prior to the Committee taking action. The Committee will take action on the drafts one after the other, without interruption.

With the full cooperation of delegations, I intend to follow that procedure strictly, so as to fully and effectively utilize the time and resources allocated to the Committee. I therefore ask all delegations to follow the procedure closely and to avoid any interruptions once the voting on a given cluster is under way. Once the Committee has taken a decision on all the draft decisions and resolutions under a given cluster, delegations will have another opportunity to explain their positions or votes in a single intervention.

I should also like to emphasize that, in accordance with the rules of procedure, the sponsors of draft resolutions are not to speak in explanation of vote, either before or after the taking of a decision. Sponsors of draft resolutions will nevertheless be able to make general statements on a given cluster under consideration before we proceed to take action on texts in that cluster.

In order to avoid misunderstandings, I ask delegations wishing to request a recorded vote on a draft resolution to so inform the Secretariat as soon as possible, and well before the Committee begins to take action on the cluster in question.

Lastly, with regard to requests for postponement of action on a draft resolution, I would like to ask all delegations to inform the Secretariat at least a day before the scheduled taking of a decision. Members will understand that this is intended to make the best use of the time available to us. Postponement of action on a draft resolution could lead to a cumulative delay that could impede our work. It would therefore be desirable, as much as possible, to avoid any requests for postponements.

To provide delegations with all the necessary information regarding the decision-taking process, the Secretariat has prepared an information note similar to those distributed in previous years. It recalls the ground rules for the process that I have just outlined in detail.

If for any reason the Committee does not conclude its consideration of the draft resolutions listed in the unofficial working paper for a given day, it will consider the remaining draft texts at the following meeting before taking up any new ones. I think that this procedure will allow us to best utilize the time and resources at our disposal.

May I take it that the Committee agrees with the procedure I have just outlined?

It was so decided.

The Chairperson (*spoke in French*): We shall now suspend the meeting for the ceremony of awarding certificates to the 2007 Disarmament Fellows.

The meeting was suspended at 5.35 p.m. for the ceremony of awarding certificates to the participants in the 2007 United Nations Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament. The meeting resumed at 6 p.m. and rose immediately thereafter.