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First Committee

21st meeting

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Official Records

Chairperson: Mr. Badji (Senegal)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 88 to 105 (continued)

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

The Chairperson (*spoke in French*): In accordance with its programme of work and timetable, this morning the First Committee will begin the third stage of its work and take decisions on all draft resolutions and draft decisions submitted under agenda items 88 to 105.

However, before we begin to take decisions, I should like to conclude the list of speakers on the subject of conventional weapons. There are about 20 speakers remaining. We shall hear from them all before proceeding to take decisions on draft resolutions.

I should like to ask for the Committee's cooperation in maintaining silence. I know that we have changed the framework for our deliberations. Conference Room 2 is not our usual venue. However, that is not a reason to lose our concentration.

Mr. Litavrin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, I should like to say that my statement was distributed on 21 October, when I was supposed to deliver it. As it is only now that I have been able to take the floor, I shall be as brief as I can.

In recent decades, conventional weapons issues have attracted growing attention from the international community. That is due to the humanitarian issues that arise from the use of those weapons against peaceful populations, a host of other issues related to their destabilizing accumulation in crises regions and to illicit trafficking. At this session, the First Committee will take up a number of draft resolutions devoted to the subject of conventional weapons.

The problem of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons continues to be an urgent issue. We support intensifying efforts to combat that evil at the national, regional and international levels. We believe that the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects is far from being implemented. Much work remains to be done by States, primarily in the areas of developing a legal foundation, strengthening oversight over the production and circulation of small arms and light weapons and improving regional cooperation. As many others have done before, we too note the need for all countries to implement the Programme so as to ensure that States can identify and track illicit small arms and light weapons in a timely manner.

Insufficient control over the activities of brokers is one of the reasons that arms are diverted into the illicit trade. We have resolved this issue in a radical manner: in the Russian Federation a single organization is licensed to provide brokering services in the area of the arms trade. Of course each State is free to decide independently how many organizations

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should be allowed to carry out brokering activities. However, it can hardly be considered normal for a small country to have hundreds of brokers. That is why we continue to support reducing the number of brokers.

I will say a few words about developing a comprehensive arms trade treaty. At the present stage we believe that it is necessary to consider this issue thoroughly, taking into account the opinions of all interested States, which number about 100. It is also necessary to analyse the efficiency of existing regional and subregional instruments regulating the legal transfer of arms. We believe that the inefficiency of existing mechanisms largely explains the desire for such a treaty. In that regard, the work to ascertain the feasibility, scope and requirements of such a comprehensive document should begin with an analysis of the reasons why such mechanisms are inefficient and failing despite the fact that they were developed while taking proper consideration of the needs and specificities of each region.

With regard to so-called inhumane weapons, it is well known that their use is regulated by an important international document, namely, 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). For us, the most important aspect of the Convention is its unique character. It is both a disarmament instrument and an instrument of international humanitarian law. That means that there is a special responsibility to strengthen the Convention. We therefore support the adoption of a separate resolution in support of the CCW.

Strengthening the Convention should be viewed above all from the perspective of universalizing and implementing the provisions of existing protocols and decisions. In that connection, we note the importance of the decisions adopted by the third CCW Review Conference, held in November of last year. We believe that the adoption of a draft resolution in support of the decisions of the third Review Conference — in particular the decision on a verification mechanism for the Convention — would increase its effectiveness.

We have no objections with regard to the draft resolution on the Convention on the whole. It can be used as a basis for further work. As compared to last year's version of the text, this year's additions pertain primarily to elements borrowed from documents that

have already been adopted — decisions from the third Review Conference and from the June 2007 preparatory meeting for the first review conference of States parties to Protocol V, as well as of the Group of Governmental Experts of States parties to the CCW.

The Chairperson (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Australia to introduce draft resolutions A/C.1/62/L.38 and A/C.1/62/L.39.

Mr. Maclachlan (Australia): Since the First Committee last met, we have seen ongoing work in various multilateral arms control forums to combat the threat posed by conventional weapons. But, more work needs to be done at the national, regional and global levels to stem the tide of suffering caused by those weapons, in particular by small arms and light weapons.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons is of great concern to Australia. Their illicit production and transfer in our region — and elsewhere — have proven to be an obstacle to security, stability and development. The United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects plays a vital role in stemming the proliferation of such weapons.

Following the disappointing 2006 Review Conference, Australia and others have been working hard to reinvigorate the Programme of Action. States will have a critical opportunity to further its implementation when the Biennial Meeting of States gathers in July next year. We welcome the innovative draft resolution co-authored by Colombia, South Africa and Japan in focusing attention on that Meeting. We hope that the draft resolution will attain the support it deserves.

Common international standards on trade and transfer would strengthen efforts against the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons and other conventional arms. A well-crafted legally binding instrument would help to prevent illegal and irresponsible transfers while providing greater assurances for legitimate trade in conventional arms. As a co-author of last year's resolution on an arms trade treaty, resolution 61/89, Australia is delighted by the overwhelming support for this draft resolution and the unprecedented number of submissions to the Secretary-General. We look forward to participating in the important work of the Group of Governmental

Experts, which provides an opportunity to explore further the scope, feasibility and draft parameters of such a treaty.

Australia is gravely concerned by the use of those cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians. Australia will continue to work through both the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the Oslo process to address that humanitarian concern. We strongly urge States parties to the Convention to agree on a mandate to negotiate on this issue next month.

Australia will introduce two draft resolutions this year. The first is A/C.1/62/L.38, which will be issued as A/C.1/62/L.38/Rev.1. That draft resolution concerns the illicit transfer and unauthorized access to and use of man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS). We remain particularly concerned by the illicit transfer and access to and use of such systems. It is essential that States implement effective controls over the production, storage and transfer of those weapons to prevent misuse by non-State actors. The consequences of a MANPADS attack at a major aviation hub would be devastating in terms of lives and livelihoods lost. Australia views tighter controls on MANPADS as enhancing the security of regional communities, thereby helping to underpin their prosperity and growth.

Two years ago, Australia introduced a draft resolution on this issue. The draft resolution was biennialized to support efforts to streamline the work of the Committee. As with that draft resolution, consensus support for this year's draft resolution would again send a clear signal of the depth of international concern about the threat of non-State actors using such weapons. Moreover, it would also send a clear signal of States' determination to prevent that.

The second draft resolution that Australia would like to introduce, A/C.1/62/L.39, concerns the Mine-ban Convention. We have streamlined the handling of this draft resolution. It is being presented by Australia, Jordan and Croatia — as the President, President-designate and previous President, respectively, of the Convention's Meeting of States Parties. It is not open to co-sponsorship this year. Nevertheless, we see that as being a sign of the maturity of the Convention, which marks its tenth anniversary this year, as well as bringing the draft resolution in line with the handling of draft resolutions

on other major arms control treaties. We hope that this important draft resolution will again attract an overwhelming positive vote. I encourage those States that abstained in previous years to support the draft resolution, as a sign of their commitment to stemming the tide of suffering caused by anti-personnel landmines.

Mr. Matenje (Malawi): As this is the first time that my delegation takes the floor, let me begin by congratulating you, Mr. Chairperson, and the Bureau on your well-deserved election. I am confident that under your leadership the work of the Committee will come to a successful conclusion.

Over the years, Malawi has witnessed an increased and alarming flow of small arms and light weapons from conflict-afflicted areas, particularly in Africa. The flow of small arms and light weapons into Malawi continues to cause fear among its citizens due to the corresponding increase in armed robberies, burglaries, gender-based violence and other violent crimes such as car-jacking, which until recently were unheard of in Malawi.

Furthermore, our natural resources, including our wildlife, are being decimated by the use of illegal weapons by poachers in our game parks and other areas. The result is that the economy is harmed, as Malawi relies on those resources to boost its tourism industry and preserve its natural heritage.

We view the continued supply of small arms and light weapons as a real threat to peace and security, not only for our country but for the whole of Africa, where they are used to perpetuate armed conflict and crime, cause immense casualties and create massive refugee flows. These arms are used to commit serious violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law and to undermine and prevent sustainable economic growth and development. They are a catalyst of armed violence.

The economic costs of armed violence represent resources lost to society that could have been invested in projects that benefit the economy and population and reduce poverty in Africa. Instead, economic growth and the livelihoods of the people in Africa are being held back by armed violence. Yet the vast majority of arms used to commit armed violence come from outside Africa. Accordingly, the disarmament community must play its part by assisting with the removal of illegal arms and preventing armed violence,

so as to help Africa achieve internationally agreed goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, in a peaceful and secure environment.

With regard to the vast amount of money lost to armed violence in Africa, I can do no better than to quote the words of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia in her foreword to *Briefing Paper No. 107*, entitled “Africa’s missing billions”, which was launched by OXFAM on 11 October 2007.

“This is money Africa can ill afford to lose. The sums are appalling: the price that Africa is paying could cover the cost of solving the HIV and AIDS crisis in Africa, or provide education, water and prevention and treatment for TB and malaria. Literally thousands of hospitals, schools, and roads could have been built, positively affecting millions of people. Not only do the people of Africa suffer the physical horrors of violence, armed conflict undermines their efforts to escape poverty.”

Apart from the immeasurable harm that the illegal use of small arms and light weapons inflicts on populations, they are also a contributing factor to the spread of global terrorism — which, in most cases, is fanned by socio-economic deprivation, increasing poverty and desperation and racial, ethnic and religious intolerance. We would like to associate ourselves with the call for the establishment of an effective international regime to regulate the manufacture and transfer of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. We believe that the unregulated availability of small arms and light weapons leads to a breakdown of the rule of law, democracy and legitimate State structures.

Accordingly, we support ongoing efforts to elaborate an arms trade treaty. We believe that that would be a significant step towards standardizing international trade in conventional arms and ensuring that those weapons do not end up in the wrong hands or be used for illegal activities. We therefore expect that such a treaty will control both the supply of and demand for conventional weapons. We call upon African Governments, arms-producing countries and the rest of the international community to vigorously and proactively support international discussions to achieve a robust treaty that will protect Africa from the daily effects of armed violence. We all have a duty to ensure swift progress towards a strong and effective

arms trade treaty. In the meantime, we support all the efforts being made in the implementation 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.

In conclusion, we wish to draw attention to the fact that hundreds of thousands of people in Africa, particularly innocent women and children, have been killed or maimed or have lost limbs. In addition, agricultural land has been rendered unusable by the presence of landmines. We call on the international community to continue to assist us in clearing land of mines and in training African experts in mine-related accident prevention.

The Chairperson (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/62/L.49/Rev.1.

Mr. Roa Arboleda (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Today I shall make two statements on behalf of my delegation. Given the limited time available, they will both be very brief. The first statement will be devoted to introducing a draft resolution. The second intervention, which I will make in English, will be on behalf of the working group on needs and resources for the Geneva Process on Small Arms.

My delegation has the honour to take the floor to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/62/L.49/Rev.1, entitled “The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects”. I am speaking on behalf of draft resolution’s sponsors — Japan, South Africa and Colombia — as well as the other 51 delegations listed on the document, which yesterday were joined by the delegation of Argentina.

The draft resolution — like resolutions 56/24B, 57/72, 58/241, 59/86, 60/81 and 61/66 — emphasizes the importance of achieving the full and speedy implementation of the Programme of Action adopted by the 2001 Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. It also encourages Member States to submit, on a voluntary basis, national reports on their implementation of the Programme of Action and the instrument on tracing and marking.

As representatives will note, draft resolution L.49/Rev.1 is based on resolution 61/66, of 6 December 2006, for which South Africa was coordinator. From that base, draft resolution

L.49/Rev.1 sets out the dates for the holding of the third biennial meeting of States to consider the implementation of the Programme of Action and decides that the meeting will take place in New York from 14 to 18 July 2008.

In developing resolution 61/66, draft resolution L.49/Rev.1 adds the national, regional and international levels to the ongoing implementation of the Programme of Action.

With regard to the Group of Governmental Experts established to consider further steps to enhance international cooperation in preventing, combating and eradicating illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons, the draft resolution takes note of the Group's report to the General Assembly and encourages States to implement its recommendations.

A new operative paragraph also underscores the need for concerted efforts at the national, regional and international levels to prevent, combat and eradicate the manufacturing, transfer and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. It also emphasizes the humanitarian and socio-economic consequences of the problem.

The draft resolution has three other new operative paragraphs, including one that recognizes the necessity for interested States to develop effective coordination mechanisms, where they do not exist, in order to match the needs of States with existing resources to enhance the implementation of the Programme of Action.

As members will note, just as with the resolutions adopted in connection with this issue between 2001 and 2006, this new draft resolution is action-oriented and aims at establishing effective follow-up to the 2001 Conference and the implementation of the Programme of Action and the tracing and marking instrument.

This draft resolution operationalizes the agreements reached through consensus at the 2001 Conference. It also sets the priorities of the international agenda on the issue of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We urge delegations that have not yet done so to become sponsors of the draft resolution.

In Colombia's statement at the 4th meeting, during the Committee's general debate, I made a reference to the working group on needs and resources that meets in Geneva under the Geneva Process on

Small Arms. This group, coordinated by Colombia, has met several times this year to help develop effective mechanisms for assessing needs and matching them with resources to facilitate the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action. We have had the participation of Australia, Israel, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, the Geneva Forum, the Quaker United Nations Office, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs.

The working group has benefited from presentations by UNIDIR on its research in cooperation and assistance in the context of implementation of the Programme of Action and by the Implementation Support Unit of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention on how needs are assessed and matched with resources to advance implementation of that instrument.

There is a rationale behind the group's work. The Programme of Action places strong emphasis on the importance of international cooperation and assistance to its implementation. However, it does not elaborate on how international cooperation and assistance should be carried out. It offers no guidance on the way in which the needs of implementing States should be assessed and subsequently matched with available resources, nor does it suggest ways in which additional resources could be mobilized to advance implementation.

A fundamental first step in the cooperation and assistance process should involve a comprehensive assessment of the needs of States in relation to implementing the Programme of Action. Since it is States that bear the responsibility for preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, each State should take upon itself the primary responsibility for assessing its own needs when it comes to meeting its obligations under the Programme of Action.

As mentioned above, national plans for implementing Programme of Action commitments should contain a strategy for resource mobilization. Where possible, the State concerned should invest some of its own resources in the realization of its plan. Such investment is a powerful signal of the importance attached by a State to meeting its Programme of Action

commitments and as such can also act as a strong incentive for donors to invest substantially in the realization of the plan.

The working group has considered many options and proposals in this regard and will continue to elaborate on these and other ideas in the future. They include the role of biennial meetings of States, a contact group on assistance, a standing support mechanism and the importance of donor coordination.

We believe that the different ideas that have been expressed in the working group can contribute to the process of improving the different mechanisms already in place for matching needs with resources or for filling the gaps that could exist in assistance and cooperation efforts for the implementation of the Programme of Action. The group has also provided an opportunity to present initiatives that can be considered within the United Nations process on the issue of small arms and light weapons.

Mr. Hellgren (Sweden): I take the floor to introduce resolution A/C.1/62/L.32, on the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW). Before that, allow me, Mr. Chairman, to briefly comment on another issue relevant to this Committee.

Sweden welcomes the reaffirmation by the Russian Federation and the United States of their continued support for the INF Treaty, expressed in their joint statement in this Committee at its 17th meeting, on 25 October. The conclusion of the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in 1987 was an important international disarmament effort that, *inter alia*, demonstrated the commitment of the parties to implementing Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The INF Treaty was a major contribution to the reduction of tension in Europe, and even after the end of the cold war it remains a pillar in the European security architecture. Sweden also notes with interest the further ideas raised in the joint statement, and we will study them carefully.

I now have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/62/L.32, on 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). I do so on behalf of more than 50 countries. My delegation is deeply grateful to all the

co-sponsoring States for their support and hopes that many more will join us in the coming days.

The purpose of the CCW is to ban or restrict the use of specific types of weapons that cause excessive injury or unnecessary suffering to combatants or that affect civilians indiscriminately. This is as pertinent and pressing as ever. Today the CCW has over 100 States parties. With the adoption and entry into force of the new Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War, the CCW has shown that it is a living and important instrument of international humanitarian law.

The number of States parties is increasing, but it still falls short of achieving universal membership. Let me take this opportunity to express my hope that the countries that have not yet joined the Convention will find it in their interest to do so and become parties to the Convention and all its Protocols, including the important amendment that extended the scope of the Convention to include situations of non-international conflict.

The purpose of the resolution that I introduce today is to continue to express support for the CCW, with particular focus on the universalization of the Convention and its Protocols. This year's resolution is also intended to follow up on the third Review Conference, which was held in November 2006. It reflects the outcome of the Review Conference and includes the necessary technical updates from last year's resolution. It is an expression of support for the CCW as an important international humanitarian law instrument. The specific substantive issues will, of course, have to be addressed by the States parties to the Convention themselves, at their forthcoming meetings.

It is our sincere hope and expectation that this resolution, as in previous years, can be adopted by this Committee without a vote.

Mr. Pfanzelter (Austria): Let me, like others, congratulate you, Sir, and thank you for your excellent work as Chairman of this Committee.

Austria fully supports the statement of the European Union presidency at the 2nd meeting and would like to concentrate on five points it deems particularly relevant — points where we think we can make an effective and practical contribution.

The first point is the fuel cycle. Here I would like to illustrate a recent Austrian proposal — an initiative to increase transparency and bring sensitive technology

under our joint control by multilateralizing the nuclear fuel cycle. After we introduced this initiative, both at the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) Preparatory Committee and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), several delegations asked us why Austria, which has no nuclear power and no nuclear enrichment facilities, would propose such an initiative. We have come to the conclusion that Austria is a State that has no financial or economic interest in the fuel cycle. It wants neither to sell nor to buy fuel, and therefore it is best suited to propose a system that is based on the principles of fairness and equality and that maximizes transparency, confidence, trust, safety and security for everyone.

The second point I wish to address is landmines. It is a central area where we have traditionally been active and where we have been able to establish considerable expertise and credibility. The remarkable success of the mine ban treaty shows that multilateralism can yield effective results if three factors are present: a clearly defined goal, a professionally thought-through process and a genuine partnership between Governments, non-governmental organizations and international organizations to achieve the goal.

Let me now turn to an issue that Austria has identified as another primary disarmament goal, namely, cluster munitions. Everyone is aware of our serious concerns about the humanitarian and developmental consequences associated with cluster munitions. These consequences have been highlighted in a number of conflicts in the past decades, showing clearly the harm these weapons can cause: harm to human beings, harm to communities, harm to the livelihood of a whole society. Cluster munitions can cause harm to the civilian population even years after active hostilities have come to an end and the local population tries to build a life in peace.

For these reasons, Austria has resolved to strive for a ban on the cluster munitions that cause such unacceptable harm, for destruction of the stocks and for a prohibition on the transfer of such munitions. Our goal is to enable swift and efficient clearance of affected areas and to assist the victims of these weapons.

Austria has undertaken to achieve this goal by various measures. In February 2007 the Austrian Government adopted a moratorium regarding the use of

cluster munitions. In our view, such a national moratorium is a good initial unilateral step, and we call upon other countries to consider taking similar measures. Even better, of course, is national legislation. Just last month, the Austrian Cabinet proposed a national law banning cluster munitions. It appears that there is broad support for this law in our parliament. After fulfilling the constitutional procedures, the Austrian Government is confident that this law can enter into force soon, possibly before the end of this year.

But a national ban is only one part of the story. Together with many other States, Austria has also pledged to work towards the goal of concluding by 2008 a legally binding instrument that would prohibit the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians and establish a framework for cooperation and assistance that ensures adequate provision of care and rehabilitation to survivors and their communities, clearance of contaminated areas, risk education and destruction of stockpiles of prohibited cluster munitions.

We are pleased to note that over the last few months more and more States are joining together to achieve this goal. We have met in various places in regional or international conferences and are preparing the groundwork for an international convention. Anyone who participated in the side event on cluster munitions organized by Peru and Austria on 18 October heard the reports about those meetings. The next meeting will be hosted by Austria. The Vienna Conference on Cluster Munitions will take place from 5 to 7 December 2007 and will be launched by a one-day civil society event organized by the Cluster Munitions Coalition on 4 December. The President of the Austrian parliament will organize a meeting of parliamentarians, also on 4 December, to raise awareness and rally support for this issue among members of legislative bodies throughout the world. Invitations to this Conference and to the meeting of parliamentarians have been issued to all partners working towards a legally binding instrument to prohibit the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians and establish a framework for cooperation and assistance.

In order to assist States in attending the Conference, Austria has funded a substantial

sponsorship programme to enable delegates from countries in need to participate in the Conference. This programme will be implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). All interested States can address UNDP as to the formalities on how to receive assistance.

At this point let me stress our gratitude to the United Nations — the Secretary-General, the Office for Disarmament Affairs and UNDP in particular. The United Nations family has consistently supported our goal. Thanks are also due to civil society, in particular the Cluster Munitions Coalition, which has contributed so positively to raising awareness and has provided substantive input for the discussions. We need to work together with determination to rid the world of these weapons. They are a real world problem, but there also exist real world solutions to ban these weapons: a national moratorium, a national law, an international convention.

The fourth subject is small arms, another topic where Austria tries to contribute constructively, both together with our European Union partners and individually. The availability of and easy access to small arms and light weapons have terrible consequences in terms of crime, terrorism, the destabilization of State structures and societies and national and international conflict. We also encounter human rights violations, as well as long-term displacement and poverty. Small arms contribute to undermining the attempts of millions of people to enjoy development opportunities in peace and security.

What have we done? Austria directly supports the destruction of small arms and light weapons stockpiles and munitions in Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Albania. We are currently examining where else we can provide financial and technical support. Financial contributions to projects in Africa, Central America and in Asia are currently under discussion.

Next year, we will have a chance to address the issues of small arms at the Biennial Meeting of States on small arms and light weapons. We should not miss the opportunity to thoroughly discuss the Programme of Action and advance its implementation.

The last point is the question of an arms trade treaty. Austria is very pleased to see the strong support among United Nations Members for a concerted effort to address the question of irresponsible trade in arms — support reflected not only by the

overwhelming majority voting in favour of General Assembly resolution 61/89 last year, but also by the high number of contributions on the feasibility, scope and draft parameters for a legally binding and universal arms trade treaty.

As with so many issues in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, the time to take action is now. We are confident that the work of the Group of Governmental Experts will facilitate our joint efforts to move this issue forward decisively in 2008. We call on all States to participate in this endeavour.

Mr. Al-Allaf (Jordan): Today, while there has been meaningful progress in banning anti-personnel landmines, and while the 1997 Ottawa Convention continues to be adhered to, with steady progress in its implementation, 40 States have still not ratified or acceded to this Convention and 13 States still produce landmines. As we welcome the tenth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Mine Ban Convention, we hope that countries that have not yet ratified or acceded to the Convention will look into doing so and will join its 155 States parties.

This November, at Amman, Jordan will have the honour to host the eighth Meeting of the States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention. States parties will meet again to reaffirm their commitments, exchange experiences and discuss challenges they have encountered in implementing their obligations. It is expected that the conference will provide an opportunity for mine-affected countries to voice their concerns and needs and state their undertakings, and that the Dead Sea progress report will bring States parties and their partners closer to the full implementation of the Convention, thereby also allowing us to move closer towards a mine-free world.

In the humanitarian efforts to ban landmines, there remains a need for the international community to complement the steady progress made in the implementation of the Convention through the mobilization of more resources and the provision of assistance to landmine-clearance operations and the rehabilitation of victims, including their social and economic reintegration, as that may be necessary in assisting many Member States to live up to their obligations under the Convention. The coming conference is an opportunity to reiterate our commitment to finding solutions in that regard.

As a State party to the Ottawa Convention, Jordan has taken effective steps to comply with the Convention's provisions. Having completely destroyed all its stockpiles of anti-personnel mines in 2003, Jordan hopes that it will be able to satisfy its Treaty obligations by May 2009 without having to ask for an extension. May I add in that regard that that has been possible due not only to the political will of the Jordanian Government, but also to the generous donations of a number of donor countries, the most recent of which was made yesterday by the Australian Government to the Jordanian national committee for demining and rehabilitation.

Jordan attaches great importance to the attainment of the universality of the Convention and welcomes the accession of four new States. Jordan also considers that the accession of both Kuwait and Iraq is of particular importance, and hopes that this will serve as further impetus for other States in the region to follow suit.

As President-designate of the upcoming Review Conference, Jordan has joined both the current President of the Meeting of States Parties and the preceding President, who was from Croatia, in introducing, as a troika, the annual draft resolution on the Convention. We hope it will receive the support it warrants from Member States.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons continues to pose numerous threats for States and regions, thereby disrupting peace, security and development and causing grave consequences. Further increasing the problem are the links that those illicit weapons have to transnational organized crime, terrorism and narcotics trafficking, which magnify their danger and make them a matter of concern to all. Combating that illicit trade and its devastating consequences thus necessitates a collective international and regional effort and a concerted response.

Today, the 2001 Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects remains the main framework through which to address the serious problems resulting from this issue. The 2006 Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action provided an opportunity to reiterate our commitment to the Programme. Earlier, the work of the Open-ended

Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons and the resulting marking and tracing instrument were additional welcome steps towards finding new ways to strengthen our efforts in this area, as was the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on brokering and its report (see A/62/163).

The next biennial conference, which is to be held no later than 2008, will hopefully provide us with another opportunity to examine how far we have gone in the implementation of the 2001 Programme of Action and to determine where we need to go from there. Progress in that area and enhanced regional and international cooperation are vital, as no State alone can address this issue by depending exclusively upon its own national resources.

Mr. Kennedy (United States of America): The United States is taking the floor this morning to address the important issue of combating the illicit brokering of small arms and light weapons. The United States is a global leader in efforts to mitigate the illicit brokering of small arms and light weapons through multilateral diplomacy and bilateral assistance to countries in need. We have in place an export law that has included brokering controls for more than a decade. The United States approach focuses on practical and effective measures to address the problem of illicit small arms and light weapons brokering in conflict regions, where it is most urgent, while acknowledging the legitimacy of the legal trade through regulation and licensing of the manufacture, export and import of arms.

The United States is fully aware of the potentially adverse consequences of illicit arms transfers, and therefore strictly regulates its exports, imports and re-transfers of defence articles and defence services to protect its national interests and the peace and security of regions of concern and the broader international community. Our delegation went on record last year in this forum to highlight the importance of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and how it can establish greater transparency and accountability of arms transfers around the world. We reiterate that support and re-emphasize the importance for all nations to enhance the transparency and accountability of their arms exports and imports, as provided for in the Register of Conventional Arms and as called for in

the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

The policies and programmes of the United States seek, in cooperation with interested Governments, to build and strengthen enforcement and legal capacities, provide training in brokering as well as baseline export controls and customs practices, discourage irresponsible and illicit exports, strengthen sanctions against violators of embargoes, enhance stockpile security and destroy excess weapons. We participate in numerous multilateral regimes, including the Wassenaar Arrangement, to further that goal.

Recognizing the importance of this issue to the international community and the experience the United States has had in developing strong and transparent export control systems, I would like to highlight features of the United States export control systems for small arms and light weapons that we believe are crucial for any nation seriously seeking to reduce illicit and irresponsible arms brokering and related illicit transfers.

First, with regard to the transparency of laws and regulation of exports, imports and brokers, the United States publishes its laws and regulations controlling the import and export of defence articles and defence services and provides foreign policy guidance. Our legal framework can be found on the websites of the Department of State, which is responsible for control of arms exports. The transparency of our legal framework is a keystone for informing persons of the United States of concerns on illicit exports and brokering and the strong enforcement measures in place to deter them.

Secondly, with regard to registration, the United States requires any United States person involved in the manufacture or export of United States defence articles or defence services to register with the United States Government, even defence manufacturers that do not export. The United States requires any United States person brokering defence articles or defence services to be registered, as well as any foreign person involved in the brokering of United States defence articles or defence services. Registration under the arms export law serves as a means for the United States to know who is in the business and provides important information on the identity and location of arms manufacturers. It also serves as the backbone of the licensing system I will describe next.

The United States requires a licence issued by the State Department for all exports and brokering of small arms and light weapons, with few exceptions. These licences are based on applications submitted by registered persons. Recognizing that re-transfer after export is a source of illicit trade, United States export applications for small arms and light weapons may include, depending on the nature of the export, an import certificate, a non-transfer and end-use certificate signed by the foreign end-user acknowledging the restriction on re-transferring defence articles to any end-user or for any end use other than that which is stated on the approved export licence.

In reviewing export applications, the State Department considers the eligibility of the applicant and all parties involved in the proposed export, import or re-transfer, the commodity being exported, the end use, the end-user and the export's effect on national security and foreign policy, to include considerations of regional stability, human rights, United States commitment to multilateral control regimes and, of course, the country of destination.

As for enforcement, the United States has a vigorous enforcement programme to ensure that all parties to an export or brokering transaction respect United States export laws and regulations. Earlier this month, the Department of Justice, joined by the Department of State, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, export enforcement from the Department of Commerce and the Department of Defense's Criminal Investigation Service announced a new comprehensive export enforcement initiative being jointly launched by those agencies. While this, in and of itself, is a broad export initiative, small arms and light weapons cases most certainly will be included.

Our penalties and fines are both criminal and civil. Examples of cases can be found on the websites of the Department of Justice, the Department of State and other regulatory agencies. They serve as strong deterrents to illicit trade. Those cases brought forward, however, show the increasing ingenuity, resources and inventiveness of those charged with illicit export, import or brokering activities.

The Department of State has developed various screening programmes to further validate the parties to licences before these licences are issued. One such

programme, initiated in September 1990, the Blue Lantern end use monitoring programme, has significantly strengthened the effectiveness of United States export controls by including overseas pre-licence and post-shipment checks. These end use checks seek to verify the bona fides of foreign parties or confirm that the conditions of approved licence authorizations are being respected. In fiscal year 2006 alone, the United States conducted 613 Blue Lantern checks, of which 90 cases yielded unfavourable information.

In conjunction with a robust export regime, the United States has also established a strong and effective import mechanism administered by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. The import system requires importers to be licensed and all importations of small arms and light weapons to be approved. Significantly, imports of small arms and light weapons must contain an import marking in addition to a manufacturing marking to assist law enforcement in tracing any imported weapon used in crime. The current system effectively prevents prohibited arms from importation without restricting the legitimate firearms trade.

The United States actively participated in the Group of Governmental Experts on illicit brokering. A valuable contribution was a thorough presentation by an Assistant United States Attorney laying out the importance of comprehensive laws and regulations on brokering backed by strong enforcement measures which allow for international law enforcement cooperation. We strongly encourage States that look to establish or strengthen their brokering laws and regulations to take the recommendations and optional elements of the Group of Governmental Experts as a guide. The United States stands ready to consider any request for assistance in this regard.

Transparent and accountable export, import and brokering controls programmes with strong enforcement penalties and fines are the keystone of any successful effort to mitigate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. With controls such as those I have just described, systems to control legal arms transfers and brokering can be more effective in reducing the illicit and irresponsible trade of small arms and light weapons.

Mr. Marques Faria (Angola): I take this opportunity to congratulate the new Chairman of this Committee.

As I have already stated during the Committee's general debate, Angola continues to be deeply concerned by the illicit trade in and proliferation of small arms and light weapons, due to their negative impact on the security and stability of various regions of the world, particularly the African continent.

Small arms and light weapons destabilize regions, fuel and prolong conflict, destabilize relief programmes, undermine peace initiatives, exacerbate human rights abuses, hamper social and economic development and foster a culture of violence. In this regard, we stress the importance of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa, as well as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials in the SADC Region, the Nairobi Declaration and the Organization of African Unity Bamako Declaration.

Furthermore, my delegation is of the view that if the fight against illicit trade of small arms and light weapons is to succeed, the international community should better coordinate efforts and implement agreed international measures to prevent the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons, their manufacture and trafficking and should reduce excessive and destabilizing accumulation and transfer of small arms and light weapons in post-conflict situations.

Critical in this regard is the need to ensure implementation of a robust follow-up component to the comprehensive United Nations Programme of Action, as well as the consideration of multilateral legal instruments, in particular, those dealing with arms brokering and the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons.

As we have already stated, the Government of Angola continues to be deeply concerned with the issue of the illicit traffic in and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. We have established a national commission for the disarmament of civilians as well as a commission for the implementation of the Programme of Action on the trade in small arms and light weapons. In the context of our commitment to the

challenge posed by small arms and light weapons, we consider these to be among the greatest accomplishments of our country.

In this connection, the various disarmament actions that we have carried out from 1999 to 2007 have allowed for the collection of 157,992 weapons of several calibres. The weapons collected include 60,110 weapons of various calibres surrendered by civil defence units, 28,327 weapons collected during 2006 and 6,129 weapons of several calibres collected during the first quarter of 2007.

In addition to the results I have just mentioned, we would like to highlight the accomplishments of several different actions taken as part of this ongoing process, such as the formulation of a draft project for the disarmament of civilians and a budget proposal for the process of the disarmament of civilians. Moreover, with the help of the United Nations, we have held various seminars to train disarmament instructors. We have also exchanged experiences in this field with neighbouring countries which have gone through the same reality.

At present, my Government's main priorities are as follows. We are organizing an international workshop on the impact of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in countries emerging from conflict. We are also carrying out provincial seminars on capacity-building in the area of disarmament. And we are raising awareness in local media about the danger of small arms and light weapons.

In addition to those efforts, Angola has been equally engaged at the level of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to eradicate this scourge in our subregion. All member countries are working to implement the political declaration drafted in 1999 and adopted by the heads of State and Government of member countries at Windhoek, Namibia, in March 2001.

The current challenge is to maintain the momentum that has been established in order to consolidate and develop existing practical initiatives and to ensure that the commitments contained in the SADC Declaration on firearms, the Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials in the Southern African Development Community Region, the Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light

Weapons and the relevant United Nations Programme of Action are being implemented in a gradual but effective manner.

In conclusion, allow me to say that, although the results to which I have referred are a good indication of the work being done, we are aware that more progress must be made to fully reach our disarmament goals. However, it is my hope that the international community will continue to support our countries, especially those emerging from conflict, by providing assistance in connection with all appropriate post-conflict initiatives related to illicit trafficking and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The implementation of the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871) is also of great importance in that regard.

Ms. García Jordán (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall focus my statement on the issue of conventional weapons.

More sophisticated and deadly conventional arms are being developed and used every day. Their growing destructive power is increasingly making them akin to weapons of mass destruction. Military actions undertaken in recent years prove that the use of that type of weapon produces ever-greater collateral damage, resulting in the deaths of thousands of innocent people.

As set out in the final document of the fourteenth Summit Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, which was held in Havana, there is a major imbalance between industrialized countries and non-aligned countries with regard to the production, possession and trade in conventional arms. Industrialized countries should significantly reduce the production and trade in those weapons, so as to promote international and regional peace and security.

We are concerned about the obvious imbalance in the treatment accorded to certain categories of conventional weapons to the detriment of others — such as sophisticated conventional weapons, whose effects are significantly devastating.

The illicit trade in weapons continues to have severe social, humanitarian and economic consequences for numerous peoples of the world, whose rights to life, peace and the enjoyment of the

benefits of sustainable development are seriously compromised.

In order to eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in the medium and short terms, we must deal with its root causes. It is a matter of concern to note that international efforts are essentially focused on addressing the manifestations of the phenomenon in developing countries, and not on combating the more profound causes with a greater impact, such as growing poverty, underdevelopment and the lack of opportunity for all — that is to say, the current international order, which is the main factor in the perpetuation of the vicious circle of exclusion and inequality.

Cuba has supported, and will continue to support, the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Likewise, Cuba has fully complied with the commitments set out in the Programme and has cooperated with regard to its initiatives and practical measures. Cuba resolutely defends the legitimate right of States to produce, import and possess small arms and light weapons to meet their legitimate security and self-defence needs, in accordance with article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. Cuba supports the implementation of an effective follow-up mechanism to ensure the full implementation of the Programme. Six years after its adoption, there are some signs of progress. However, there is yet much to be done to achieve its full implementation. International assistance and cooperation for developing countries are crucial to their making progress towards the full implementation of the Programme of Action.

Cuba, which is a State party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, fully shares the legitimate humanitarian concerns associated with the indiscriminate and irresponsible use of anti-personnel mines. At the same time, it is well known that my country has for more than four decades been the object of a policy of ongoing hostility and aggression by the military super-Power. As a result, it is not possible for Cuba to give up the use of that kind of weapon, as it is necessary in order to preserve its sovereignty and territorial integrity in line with the right to self-defence enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. It is for that reason that my country is not a State party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

We will continue to support fully any effort that, while maintaining the necessary balance between humanitarian and national security issues, is aimed at eliminating the terrible effects that the irrational and irresponsible use of anti-personnel mines cause to the civilian populations and economies of many countries.

Cuba urges all States in a position to do so to provide the necessary financial, technical and humanitarian assistance in the areas of mine clearance and the social and economic rehabilitation of victims.

I would like to conclude by emphasizing that Cuba remains fully committed to multilateralism and to the need to exercise it fully in order to achieve effective solutions in promoting international peace and security. In that regard, I should like to inform the Committee that Cuba recently deposited its instrument of acceptance with regard to the amendment to article 1 of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

Mr. Itzhaki (Israel): The uncontrolled spread of conventional weapons is one of the main sources of instability in regions around the world. Irresponsible transfers often contribute to increased human suffering and become a barrier to development and a stumbling block to achieving peace and security.

In particular, the continuous and increased flow of sophisticated weapons and other military equipment and know-how to terrorists has lately exacerbated the nature of that threat. Among the sophisticated systems that have been found in the hands of terrorists are man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS), short-, medium- and long-range rockets, missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles and other weapons.

Arms transfers to terrorists also have shown the capacity to strengthen extreme elements in a conflict, thus turning terrorist groups into the dominating power. That dangerous phenomenon is of a global nature, not limited to any specific region, and constitutes an imminent threat to global security and stability. That phenomenon poses a grave danger to civilian populations, as terrorists by their very nature intentionally use these arms against civilians.

The proper balance between the legitimate security needs of States and the need to prevent unnecessary human suffering and threats against civilians must be attained by strictly controlling arms at the national level and by instituting effective national restraint on transfers.

Although currently there are diverse instruments that, in a convoluted and disjointed manner, deal with the problem of arms transfers to terrorists, there remains a critical need for a focused strategy to deal with this threat in order to turn principle into practice. My Government believes that the best way to curb illicit arms proliferation is through strong national commitment and determination. In this context, I refer participants to the working paper presented by my delegation to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva this past June. Here, I wish to refer briefly to a few of the issues raised.

International documents and resolutions addressing the prevention of arms transfers to terrorists demonstrate a real need for a comprehensive and systematic approach. To this end, long-enduring differences over definitions, such as those shown by the international community vis-à-vis the creation of treaties addressing the different manifestations of terrorist activities, should be put aside for the sake of pragmatism. One such step could be the identification of possible national programmes designed to increase awareness and build capacity. That could be followed by promoting avenues which enhance cooperation among States, whether multilaterally or bilaterally.

Illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons has affected many societies worldwide, causing suffering primarily to civilian populations. The United Nations Programme of Action of July 2001 has made a significant contribution to international arms control efforts in the past few years and has raised the issue of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons to a higher priority. Today, more and more States are aware of the urgent necessity to apply enhanced standards of control over small arms and light weapons. Surplus small arms and light weapons are being destroyed, and standards related to marking and recordkeeping, as well as the tracing of illicit small arms and light weapons, are becoming globally accepted.

The United Nations Programme of Action was designed to prevent and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. The international community mandated the June 2006 Review Conference to find effective means to reduce the humanitarian devastation caused by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Although the Review Conference failed to agree on a concluding document, it reiterated the key role of the United Nations Programme of Action. Like other delegations, we

regret that the conference was not capable of reaching consensus over a document.

Israel is ready to continue working together with other interested States to identify standards for transfer control that will effectively reduce the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, including implementation of the marking and tracing instrument, full compliance with Security Council arms embargoes, assessment of the risk of diversion to illicit end-users, a ban on the transfer of man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS) to non-State actors, satisfactory management and control of stockpiles, and other similar measures.

We welcome Canada's initiative to hold a special meeting in Geneva to discuss the issue of small arms and light weapons transfers. Israel also participates in the Geneva forum and is looking forward to a substantive biennial meeting on the Programme of Action. We believe that the Programme of Action should be the appropriate international framework for continuing deliberations on this issue.

For its part, Israel has maintained a vigorous national export control system throughout the years. Recently, Israel has embarked on a reform process designed to ensure that its export control system, including the relevant legislation and operational framework, meets recognized international standards, in particular those set by the international suppliers regime.

Last July the Israeli parliament approved the new export control law, scheduled to enter into force on 31 December 2007, replacing the secondary law under which Israel's export control system has operated thus far. The new law will regulate the control over items on the basis of the munitions list of the Wassenaar Arrangement. It will also apply controls over dual-use items and technologies based on the dual-use list of the Arrangement.

The new legislation establishes a new licensing authority within the Ministry of Defense. Moreover, a new inter-agency process for evaluating licensing applications, in which the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs plays an unprecedented major role, has been put in place. Licensing applications are assessed within the inter-ministerial process on a case-by-case basis according to recognized criteria, among which are Security Council embargoes and sanctions regimes, international commitments of Israel and other States,

the internal situation — including respect for human rights — in the State of destination, and the risk of diversion of those arms towards the illicit market.

Israel remains to be convinced that an international arms trade treaty could indeed provide commonly agreed standards that could enhance the level of care exercised by States in the sale or transfer of arms. This concern stems from the interest in ensuring that effective measures would indeed stop the uncontrolled flow of weapons and military equipment to untrustworthy hands, in particular terrorists. We also believe that in developing an arms trade treaty, attention should be accorded to the possibility that such an instrument could be used in a politically abusive manner against States seeking to obtain arms for the legitimate purposes of self-defence, as well as possibly hindering the legitimate trade in military equipment.

Finally, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) will face many challenges in the coming few weeks. As a State party to the CCW, Israel is prepared to engage constructively in order to achieve a successful outcome of the November meeting. We see the CCW as the only credible and reliable forum for effectively addressing the humanitarian consequences caused by certain conventional weapons. That is done through carefully preserving a balance between humanitarian consequences and legitimate security considerations. Other initiatives not only threaten to undermine the CCW but may also divert resources from the issue, which will hamper an appropriate and tangible response to the humanitarian needs.

Mr. Muburi-Muita (Kenya): The problem of small arms and light weapons has brought a lot of anguish and suffering to our people. For us in Kenya, urban crime has recently become more daring and brutal. The commercialization of cattle-rustling among our pastoral communities has become entrenched in our societies, leading to a great deal of loss of life and livelihood.

This scenario is widespread across our region, where there is a multiplicity of combat groups operating with impunity across States. Ours is a region where generations have not known any other life than those they have lived in refugee camps. The number of displaced persons increases every day. Indeed, whole communities in our part of the world have been destabilized and dehumanized.

Our region has expended immense efforts and resources to resolve armed conflicts. However, no sooner do we solve one conflict than another erupts with even greater devastation. Ongoing and incipient conflicts are both prime markets for illicit firearms and the sources of these weapons. Whereas we recognize that it is the task of every Government to secure national stability, economic development and human security for its people, we also acknowledge that the preponderance of illicit arms and light weapons and their attendant effects contribute largely to the erosion of those goals.

Kenya has therefore endeavoured to embrace all strategies aimed at arriving at viable solutions to the problem of illegal arms and light weapons. At the national level, we are firmly committed to the search for and removal of firearms in illicit circulation within our borders. In this respect, we have so far destroyed over 20,000 assorted firearms by public burning. This activity has been accompanied by public awareness programmes to educate the citizenry on the evils of illicit firearms and the culture of violence. Our Government is also attentive to the need to put in place development programmes that help to reduce the factors that encourage the demand for firearms by our communities.

At the regional level, we have invested heavily in the prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts, and we continue to do so. Kenya has also committed herself to the implementation of the Nairobi Declaration and the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa. In doing so, we acknowledge the need for collaborative efforts in tackling the problem, due to its cross-border nature.

Along those lines, Kenya has made significant contributions by hosting the secretariat of the Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa over the years and has supported it with necessary personnel and other logistics. Today, the secretariat has grown into a full-fledged inter-governmental body, grouping together 12 Member States. I am happy to note that on Friday, 19 October 2007, the Sixth Committee discussed the question of observer status in the United Nations for the Regional Centre. Observer status in the United Nations will greatly enhance the Centre's capability to advance its goals through quality

interaction with Member States and international organizations in its efforts to address the problem of illicit small arms and light weapons. I request all delegations to support the resolution to grant observer status to the Centre.

Kenya is persuaded that a universally applicable regime to control the manufacture and transfer of firearms is a key priority, particularly for our part of the world, which still continues to suffer the effects of irresponsible transfers and management of small arms and light weapons. We therefore remain committed to the actualization of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and to taking a leading role in advocating for the establishment of a legally binding treaty to control the small-arms trade.

The desire by a majority of Member States to work towards the establishment of an arms trade treaty was clearly manifested by the overwhelming support for the arms trade treaty resolution (resolution 61/89) during last year's session of the General Assembly. It was subsequently reiterated by the large number of responses to the Secretary-General's request for views. Those are unequivocal signs that States do have the political will to face the serious problem of the irresponsible transfers of arms.

The establishment of a group of governmental experts will be the next logical step in the process towards achieving an arms trade treaty. We wish the group a successful and constructive exercise, which, no doubt, will not be without challenges. With determination and a clear focus, however, it will be possible to arrive at a useful outcome. Kenya, as one of the sponsors of the draft resolution, will continue to advocate an arms trade treaty and will remain actively engaged in all processes towards that realization.

Mr. Najafi (Islamic Republic of Iran): The Islamic Republic of Iran attaches great importance to the consideration of the issue of conventional weapons within the United Nations. We reaffirm the sovereign and inherent right of States to acquire, manufacture, export, import and retain conventional arms for their self-defence and security needs in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. Any arrangement for regulation of conventional armaments should be in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter.

We are of the opinion that, in order to effectively address the negative implications of the illicit arms

trade, it is essential to develop and maintain an integrated approach. My delegation believes that the legitimate and legal conventional arms trade among Member States is not the major problem, and no urgent need exists for this matter to be dealt with at this stage. As can be seen by the United Nations Register system for conventional arms, major categories of conventional arms transfers are covered by the Register and are mostly transparent. It is evident that the illegal transfer of certain categories of conventional arms, such as aircraft, warships, missiles and tanks, cannot take place as easily as the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Therefore, there is little merit to trying to cover such transfers.

Furthermore, according to valid international surveys, it is estimated that from 60 to 90 per cent of the direct deaths in violent conflicts are caused by small arms. It goes without saying that tremendous effort has already been made by the international community in the conclusion 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 by consensus in 2001. It was then followed up by the 2006 Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action.

Moreover, the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons was painstakingly negotiated by all Member States and was adopted in late 2005 by the General Assembly within the framework of the Programme of Action.

All of those efforts, which represent a progressive multilateral approach, should not suddenly be abandoned and overlooked. Though the major problem of the developing countries in this regard has been the transfer of illicit small arms and light weapons, regrettably, the provisions of the Programme of Action have not been fully implemented and duly supported by certain major exporters of such weapons. Given the time and money spent by the Member States on the conclusion and then the implementation of the Programme of Action and the disagreement over substantive issues at the 2006 Review Conference, it is not appropriate to further burden Member States, particularly developing countries, by creating a new, non-consensual track.

The illicit trade in small arms continues to be the most destabilizing factor and is often associated with terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime. It is thus necessary for the United Nations to continue to focus on measures aimed at eradicating the illicit trade in small arms.

The unabated production of arms by major producers on a very large scale, aimed at exporting most of those arms to other countries, is a matter of serious concern. Overproduction of arms could lead to an excessive supply of weapons and consequently facilitate their entry into regions of tensions. The ambitious and irresponsible export of arms to the Middle East region represents a clear example in that regard. The recent announcement by the United States that it will export billions of dollars of arms and military assistance to Middle Eastern countries is cause for concern, not only for us, but for many peace-loving countries throughout the international community, because it has raised the spectre of an arms race in the region. The planned \$30 billion in arms exports, including sophisticated offensive weapons to the Zionist regime, is intended to build the confidence of that regime's war machine in pursuing its expansionist and destabilizing policies in the region.

In conclusion, I would like to state that at the national level, the Islamic Republic of Iran has responsibly enforced and continues to enforce effective measures to prevent and curb the illicit trafficking and transfer of such weapons, while emphasizing the inherent right of States to the national production of such weapons — which should be duly marked and registered under strict national laws and regulations — for legal export and transfer.

In order to deal with the problem of the illegal transfer of arms and to discuss possible solutions in that regard, my delegation declares its readiness to discuss and exchange views with other Member States within the framework of the United Nations. In that context, we will wait for the results of the discussion of the upcoming governmental group of experts on an arms trade treaty. In the meantime, my delegation would like to put on record that it reserves its right to present substantive proposals and comments on the report of that expert group in the future.

The Chairperson (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/62/L.12.

Mr. Landman (Netherlands): I have two statements to make: one of a short nature and one of a longer nature.

The short statement relates to the initiative by the United States and the Russian Federation concerning the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. The Netherlands welcome the reaffirmation by the Russian Federation and the United States of their continued joint support for the 1987 Treaty on the elimination of intermediate- and shorter-range missiles. The Netherlands is ready to discuss the possibility of imparting a global character to that regime, which is still one of the pillars in the international and European security architecture, as requested in the joint statement by the Russian Federation and the United States on 25 October before this Committee (see A/C.1/62/PV.17).

My second statement relates to the introduction of the draft resolution (A/C.1/62/L.12), entitled "National legislation on transfer of arms, military equipment and dual-use goods and technology". With that draft resolution, Member States are encouraged to provide, on a voluntary basis, information to the Secretary-General on their national legislation, regulations and procedures on the transfer of arms, military equipment and dual-use goods and technology and the changes therein.

Effective national control of those transfers, including transfers that could contribute to proliferation activities, is an important tool for achieving the objectives of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. The exchange of national legislation, regulations and procedures on the transfer of arms, military equipment and dual-use goods and technology contributes to mutual understanding and confidence among Member States. Moreover, such transparency is beneficial to Member States that are in the process of developing legislation on those transfers.

The Netherlands has tabled this draft resolution before; we did so in 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005. In light of the biennialization of First Committee resolutions, we decided in 2005 to continue tabling this draft resolution, but only every other year.

Compared to resolution 60/69 of 2005, the current text has been updated on two accounts. Most importantly, a new preambular paragraph has been included to reflect the establishment of the electronic database by the Secretariat's Office for Disarmament

Affairs, in which all information exchanged pursuant to this draft resolution can be consulted. The Netherlands is very grateful to the Office for Disarmament Affairs for establishing this database and keeping it updated. I gladly refer all delegations to the Internet address included in the resolution and welcome all new submissions and updates that Member States can provide. Other changes are the result of regular updates.

For the last three years, this draft resolution was adopted by consensus. The Netherlands trusts that the draft resolution again meets with the approval of all Member States and looks forward to its adoption by consensus.

Mr. Cujba (Moldova): At the outset, I would like to join previous speakers in sincerely congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, on your assumption of the chairmanship and to express our appreciation for the skilful manner in which you are guiding the work of this Committee.

The Republic of Moldova fully subscribes to the statement made at the 2nd meeting by the delegation of Portugal on behalf of the European Union. I will further present some observations in my national capacity.

During our debate, the majority of speakers reiterated their countries' commitments to an effective multilateral system comprising disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and agreements and international organizations, verification mechanisms and regimes, while pledging their support to those bodies and appealing for the upholding, implementing and strengthening of the relevant international instruments. We entirely share that approach, considering it an effective modality and the only feasible one for tackling threats and challenges to international peace and security.

Similarly, we express our disappointment with the lack of tangible outcomes at certain major conferences and, in this regard, recall the 2006 Conference to Review the 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. The continuing illicit manufacture, excessive accumulation, transfer and spread of small arms and light weapons pose a serious challenge to our efforts to defuse tension in many conflict zones and to bring stability, reduce

poverty and ensure sustainable development in many countries. We must increase our efforts to implement the Programme of Action at all levels, with common determination and concrete actions to overcome the stalemate in the small arms and light weapons area.

The Republic of Moldova is strongly committed to the implementation of the Programme of Action, and the Moldovan authorities are undertaking all necessary efforts in that respect. Moldova is continuously developing its legislative and regulatory framework governing control of small arms and light weapons. Recently, new amendments to current legislation were adopted with the aim of enforcing the national arms control regime, and Moldova introduced a State monopoly in the production and sale of weapons and explosives. Accordingly, the production, import, export and re-export, sale, transportation and storage of special military and combat machinery and any kind of firearms, explosives or pyrotechnic materials are authorized only by State institutions and enterprises.

The quantity of weapons that are potentially available for illicit circulation is constantly being reduced through the destruction of small arms and light weapons seized by law enforcement agencies from the civilian population and through projects implemented within the regional arrangements. There are plans to destroy more than 12,000 units of munitions from governmental stockpiles this year, with the support of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Mission to Moldova and the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre and with financial assistance from the Government of Finland.

The actions on the national level are backed by Moldova's active participation in the regional and subregional arrangements in South-Eastern Europe. Moldova fully supports OSCE, European Union and NATO initiatives to restrict the uncontrolled manufacturing, accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons. We work towards full compliance with the guidelines, decisions and regulations related to arms transfers adopted by the European Union.

Regrettably, our Government's ability to deal with the problems of small arms and light weapons throughout the territory of Moldova is seriously hindered by the unresolved conflict in the eastern regions of my country, which are controlled by a separatist regime. While Moldova was enhancing its participation in different regional and subregional

arrangements and striving to implement the relevant provisions of international treaties and arrangements, illegal activities were flourishing in the breakaway region and the separatist regime was consolidating its military capabilities and refusing any verification missions from international and regional organizations.

For years, Moldovan authorities consistently took actions to stabilize the situation in the region, reducing its military capabilities and destroying excessive stocks of conventional weapons. On the other side, the separatist regime was arming itself, benefiting from transfers of tanks, armoured vehicles, artillery systems, combat helicopters and other munitions, all being handed over to it by Russian forces stationed on our territory, contrary to Moldova's will.

The constitutional authorities of my country will never waver in their commitment and their efforts to peacefully resolve the conflict and to bring stability to my country and the entire region. At the beginning of this month, Mr. Vladimir Voronin, President of the Republic of Moldova, announced new initiatives proposing that the Transnistrian leadership undertake disarmament and demilitarization measures in parallel with Moldova. President Voronin proposed the full demilitarization of Moldova on both banks of the Nistru River, envisioning the liquidation of all tanks and armoured vehicles, multiple-rocket launchers and artillery of any type, both by lawful Moldovan and by unlawful Transnistrian forces, within six months. Under the proposals, there would be deep cuts in the manpower of the forces on both banks. The proposals were welcomed by the parties involved in the settlement process. We sincerely hope that they will be embraced by the other side, which would generate significant momentum for a comprehensive solution to the Transnistrian conflict.

In concluding my statement, I would like to emphasize that the Republic of Moldova faithfully respects its commitments under the international agreements to which my country is a party and is genuinely interested in the development of new arrangements aimed at strengthening the legal framework in the area of conventional weapons. At the same time, we consider that our security architecture must be built on the basis of the preservation of existing multilateral arrangements, not on their erosion.

In that regard, the issue of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty) is

of particular significance. The CFE Treaty is one of the most far-reaching arms control, disarmament and confidence-building measures agreed upon on the European continent and is widely considered the cornerstone of European security. Moldova, like other States parties to the Treaty, regards it as one of the most important multilateral documents on arms control and as fundamental to the preservation of peace and stability in Europe. The signing of the Agreement on adaptation of the CFE Treaty, in 1999, was a logical step towards adjusting that international document to the current situation, and the Republic of Moldova supported that process.

Moldova has declared its readiness to ratify the adapted CFE Treaty after the Russian Federation fulfils its 1999 Istanbul commitments concerning the withdrawal of its military presence from our territory, which we see as a prerequisite for overall ratification of the adapted CFE Treaty. Therefore, Moldova continues to express its disappointment at the Russian Federation's failure to fulfil its commitments and regrets that country's announced intention to suspend its participation in the CFE Treaty and related international treaties.

We are following very attentively the efforts and proposals by States parties to the CFE Treaty promoting its swift ratification by all countries and its entry into force by the summer of 2008. At the same time, Moldova reiterates its position that the adapted CFE Treaty can be ratified only after a complete and unconditional withdrawal of Russian forces from Moldova's territory.

Mr. Seruhere (United Republic of Tanzania): The United Republic of Tanzania joins preceding speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Committee and on the good leadership that you have shown in steering both the general debate and the ongoing thematic debate.

Tanzania fully associates itself with the statements made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the African Group and by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Achieving a comprehensive disarmament regime in the world is a visionary goal. We commend the strides made so far with regard to nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. The Tanzania delegation would like to remind the Secretariat that Tanzania was among the countries that submitted views on the

proposals for an arms trade treaty, on 16 July 2006. We expect our contribution to be reflected in the list of contributors.

Tanzania reaffirms its support for the Assembly's long-standing call for full implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and of other disarmament instruments and urges the speedy conclusion of a comprehensive arms trade treaty.

The problem of the illicit circulation and proliferation of small arms and light weapons has yet to be fully resolved. We join delegations that spoke earlier on this issue in expressing great concern at the massive loss of lives, property and human dignity inflicted by small arms and light weapons on the populations of developing countries, especially in Africa. We believe that developing countries are not adequately safeguarded against the lethal threat posed by such weapons. We welcome the granting of observer status to the Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa, in Nairobi, which is doing commendable work in generating awareness about the threat of small arms and light weapons and assisting countries in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa in addressing that mandate. However, more needs to be done at the global level.

Tanzania has made considerable efforts in collecting and destroying small arms and light weapons, including unexploded ordnance. We are signatories to and have ratified the Ottawa Convention on Anti-personnel Landmines and have destroyed all the landmines in our stockpiles. Furthermore, in joint efforts with the Belgian non-governmental organization APOPO, Tanzania has developed an environmentally friendly and low-cost technology using rats to detect anti-personnel mines, which are then destroyed. This technology is available for the United Nations and Member States that wish to search for and eliminate anti-personnel mines either in peacekeeping areas or in the context of post-conflict reconstruction, repatriation and reintegration operations. We note that some countries in Southern Africa with landmine problems are already successfully using the technology.

Tanzania expresses great appreciation for the efforts made by both the United Nations and the international community in addressing the problem of the illicit circulation and proliferation of small arms

and light weapons. As the challenge continues, Tanzania wishes to propose that an intersessional meeting for the African region be held before the next Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms, so as to provide Member States, the international community and other stakeholders with an opportunity and a forum to comprehensively address the problem of small arms and light weapons and its consequences, through increased international cooperation. In that regard, Tanzania proposes that such a meeting be held in April or May 2008. We call upon the Office for Disarmament Affairs, development partners and the countries of the African region to make the meeting a reality.

Mr. Sepponen (Finland): I wish to take the floor very briefly regarding the joint statement made by the Russian Federation and the United States on 25 October in this Committee (see A/C.1/62/PV.17).

The conclusion of the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in 1987 was a milestone in international disarmament efforts. The Treaty is one of the pillars of the global, and particularly the European, security architecture.

Finland attaches great importance to the commitment to a strong role for the INF Treaty. We welcome the significant reaffirmation by the Russian Federation and the United States of their continued support for the Treaty.

Mr. Trezza (Italy): Like other delegations, Italy would like to make a short declaration on the joint statement made in the First Committee by the Russian Federation and the United States on 25 October 2007.

Italy participated actively in the process leading to the conclusion of the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-range and Shorter-range Missiles, the INF Treaty. The 1987 INF Treaty was a milestone in international disarmament efforts. It was a major contributing factor in reducing tensions between the two former alliance systems. It remains one of the pillars of the global, and particularly the European, security architecture.

Italy welcomes the reaffirmation made by the Russian Federation and the United States of their continued support for the INF Treaty. The proposal outlined in the joint statement made in the First Committee by the Russian Federation and the United

States on 25 October 2007 is to be seen as an effort aimed at strengthening the international missile non-proliferation and disarmament process, which is supported by Italy.

Mr. Yaung Chan (Cambodia): First of all, let me congratulate you, Mr. Chairperson, on the good arrangements to date for our thematic discussion on all aspects of disarmament and non-proliferation. Our discussion on conventional weapons will definitely contribute to furthering our commitment to reduce the threat posed by those weapons.

As we have seen in many regions, although small in nature, small arms carry big concerns for all of us, and are one of the main root causes of conflict, danger, violence and transnational crime. We cannot underestimate the illegal use and circulation of small arms and light weapons, as they can be equally dangerous sources of terrorism, violence and regional conflict.

Cambodia is at the forefront of combating small arms and light weapons. Last year in the First Committee, Cambodia supported all the draft resolutions on the issue of conventional weapons. We strongly believe in multilateral mechanisms to reduce the danger of small arms and other forms of conventional weapons.

While attaching importance to the 2001 United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Cambodia has developed a number of programmes that range from law-enforcement in the area of controlling small arms to a weapons-for-development programme that has successfully led to the seizure and destruction of more than 200,000 small arms and light weapons. In that regard, my delegation wishes to take this opportunity to express its deep gratitude and appreciation to Japan, the European Union and other countries for their valuable assistance to our programmes.

Landmines continue today to pose serious threats to many nations in the developing world, especially in countries emerging from war. Those silent killers have destroyed the lives of many innocent people and have maimed countless others. Landmines constitute not only a security problem but also a humanitarian one, as victims become permanently traumatized and physically handicapped, while their families suffer the untold misery of spiritual and material deprivation. Landmines also have a great impact on economies and

development, as their effects place a heavy economic and social burden on Governments.

Despite full peace after years of conflict, Cambodia is still one of the most heavily mined countries in the world. Mines are still hidden in thousands of square kilometres of land. Nearly half of the whole Cambodian population is directly or indirectly threatened by these silent killers. Due to that fact, my Government considers mine-clearance action to be one of the highest priorities among activities focused on the rehabilitation and development of our nation. Furthermore, the Royal Government is carrying out its mine-clearance campaign by placing demining operations on its relevant national agenda, including Cambodia's millennium development goals and the Government's rectangular strategy.

It may take a week or two to lay landmines in hectares of land, but it will take years to clear them. Our national mine action centre has recently been active in clearing long-hidden mines throughout the country, in order to provide farmland for people. Along with that, some Government and international governmental organizations have contributed both financial and material assistance to speed up mine-clearance activities. Japan's mine action service is also active, working to remove mines and unexploded ordnance in Cambodia. I am also delighted that the representative of Australia last week highlighted her country's valuable mine action assistance in Cambodia. We express our deep thanks for that.

As a result of those efforts, up until July of this year, more than 1.5 million landmines had been cleared. Through the visible scars left by landmines, Cambodia's people are still living with the tragedies of mine explosions. Landmine casualties are a fact of life in Cambodia. Mine victims are struggling to survive. Many have paid the price of mines in lost limbs. Many are blind.

In order to further explain the rationale for our activities with regard to landmines, in March of this year, with the cooperation of Canada, Cambodia hosted a conference under the theme "Mine action: implications for peace and development". The conference was among the events held throughout the world to mark the tenth anniversary of the Ottawa Mine-ban Convention. In that regard, we call upon all States to become parties to the Convention and to take the bold step of renouncing landmines forever.

In order to share our experiences with other countries that are also victims of landmines, Cambodia has dispatched to the Sudan a second group of 135 deminers of the Cambodian Royal Government's armed forces to carry out mine clearance actions under the umbrella of United Nations peacekeeping operations.

The Chairperson (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Cameroon to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/62/L.52.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time that I take the floor during this session of the First Committee, I cannot help yielding to the pleasure of expressing to you, Mr. Chairperson, the gratitude of my delegation for the great competence and ability with which you are guiding our work. Your outstanding qualities, which all here recognize, will ensure the success of our deliberations. My delegation assures you of its full support.

My delegation has asked for the floor to introduce, on behalf of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), draft resolution A/C.1/62/L.52, entitled "Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa". As members know, the Committee was established in 1992 by the Secretary-General, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/37 B. Its mission is to develop confidence-building measures and to promote arms limitation and the development of Central Africa.

Since its establishment, the Committee has made a number of important achievements in these areas and has contributed to establishing a true collective security system within the subregion. The Committee held its twenty-sixth ministerial meeting in Yaoundé from 3 to 7 September 2007 as well as a subregional conference on cross-border security issues in Central Africa.

Such draft resolutions regarding the activities of the Advisory Committee are traditionally adopted by consensus, both in the First Committee and in the General Assembly. Once again, my delegation would like to thank the members of this Committee for their support and call on them, as usual, to give their support to draft resolution A/C.1/62/L.52.

Members will note that this text is more concise than those of previous years, but it is no different from them in substance. The draft resolution welcomes the Sao Tome Initiative, which provides for the drafting of a legal instrument on the control of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa. It takes note of the recommendations of the conference on cross-border security issues to which I referred earlier, particularly the recommendation relating to the project for the establishment of an international school in Cameroon to train African gendarmes and police in peacekeeping operations. This has become a project for the entire Central African region.

The draft resolution also reaffirms the General Assembly's support for efforts aimed at promoting confidence-building measures at the regional level in order to ease tensions and conflicts in Central Africa and to further peace, stability and development in the subregion. It encourages the States members of the Standing Advisory Committee to implement Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and urges the international community to support the activities of the Committee through contributions to the Trust Fund to support the Committee.

Let me note that a revised version of the draft resolution will be circulated before the vote. By taking account of comments made by a number of delegations, particularly with respect to paragraph 2, the revised text should enable all members to adopt it, as usual, by consensus.

The Chairperson (*spoke in French*): We have heard the final speaker in the debate on the theme of conventional weapons. We have thus completed the second stage of our deliberations. We have had a substantive thematic debate that has been very constructive, thanks, in particular, to the high quality of the contributions made by distinguished speakers whom we have had the pleasure of welcoming here. We have also had exchanges and have heard excellent statements made by many delegations. I would like to commend all participants on their active, high-quality participation.

Before we proceed to the third stage of our deliberations, I would like to suspend the meeting to allow members to fill out a document circulated by the Secretariat, which is conducting a survey which I think is important.

The meeting was suspended at 12.20 p.m. and resumed at 12.25 p.m.

Agenda items 88 to 105 (continued)

Action on all draft resolutions submitted under disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chairperson (*spoke in French*): The Committee will now begin the third stage of its work, namely, action on all draft resolutions submitted under agenda items 88 to 105. The Committee will take action on the draft resolutions listed on informal working paper no. 1, beginning with those under cluster 1, nuclear weapons. Then the Committee will take action on draft resolutions under cluster 2, other weapons of mass destruction, followed by action on draft resolutions and decisions under clusters 3 to 7.

I should like to remind delegations that the Committee will follow the procedure that has already been outlined in the information document regarding the ground rules that was distributed yesterday. I therefore again ask that all delegations observe the established procedure and abstain from any interruptions once the voting process under a given cluster has begun. Allow me also to quickly remind delegations that the authors of draft resolutions can make statements of a general nature at the beginning of the meeting with regard to a specific cluster. However, in accordance with the rules of procedure, those delegations cannot make statements in explanation of vote, either before or after the voting.

With regard to requests to postpone the taking of decisions, I should like to inform members that, on the request of delegations that have drafted various draft resolutions, decisions on draft resolution A/C.1/62/L.9, submitted under cluster 1, draft resolutions L.13, L.14, L.16 and L.51, submitted under cluster 6, and draft resolution L.15, submitted under cluster 7, have been postponed to a later date. I hope delegations have taken note of those postponements.

Before the Committee begins to take action on the relevant draft resolutions under cluster 1 listed on informal working paper 1, I shall give the floor to delegations to make statements of a general nature — not explanations of vote — in connection with draft resolutions or decisions, as well as to introduce draft resolutions.

I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/62/L.2.

Mr. Darwish (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to read out a statement on behalf of my delegation in connection with draft resolution A/C.1/62/L.2, entitled “The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East”.

Nuclear arsenals are being developed, nuclear stockpiles increased and new weapons developed, and the use of such weapons is being threatened. Nuclear-weapon States have failed to meet their obligations and pledges at the 1995, 2000 and 2005 Review Conferences. At the same time, pressure is being put on States to prevent them from acquiring the necessary means to defend their security and sovereignty. That right is guaranteed under the Charter of the United Nations, international law and existing international conventions.

As we look forward to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and the achievement of the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the actions of Israel, which has acquired nuclear weapons outside the framework of the non-proliferation regime, are being disregarded, even supported, as States parties are prevented from using technology for peaceful purposes and development — the basic purpose for the establishment of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

As far as the situation in the Middle East is concerned, Israel is continuing to pursue its policy of aggressive armament based on its huge arsenal of every type of conventional and non-conventional weapon, including weapons of mass destruction, foremost among which are nuclear weapons. Israel maintains a dangerous military nuclear programme that threatens the security of the region and the world. That programme is free of any effective international control, nor has there been any international response to this grave matter.

Therefore, unique among all other regions of the world, the Middle East region is the most vulnerable to threats and distortions of fact. Syria was among the first States to call for the declaration of the Middle East as a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction, foremost among which are nuclear weapons. Syria has vigorously sought to achieve that goal. We have contributed to numerous initiatives for that purpose,

the most recent of which was the draft resolution that my country submitted to the Security Council on 29 December 2003, on behalf of the Group of Arab States. That draft resolution aimed at ridding the region of all weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, under a framework of effective and collective international control and the supervision of the United Nations, thereby enhancing the role of multilateral disarmament and international instruments.

The failure to date to adopt that Arab initiative encourages Israel to continue to refuse to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to place all its nuclear activities and facilities under the IAEA safeguards regime. In that regard, we call upon the international community to bring pressure to bear on Israel so that it will accede to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, as well as to establish an effective mechanism to that end, in order to contribute to the stability of the region and move towards the establishment of a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East.

Mrs. García Jordán (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Cuba would like to make a statement in the context of cluster 1, on the issue of nuclear weapons.

As in previous years, Cuba is a sponsor of various draft resolutions under cluster 1, including draft resolutions A/C.1/62/L.10, L.21, L.23, L.27, L.36 and L.44. This year, we have also decided to co-sponsor draft resolution A/C.1/62/L.40, entitled "Nuclear disarmament". We believe that the text on which action is to be taken has been strengthened in comparison with those of recent years. We are especially pleased that the text of draft resolution L.40 includes all the proposals made by the Cuban delegation.

Cuba believes that A/C.1/60/L.40 is one of the draft resolutions before the First Committee that most comprehensively addresses the issue of nuclear disarmament and that adequately reflects the utmost priority that nuclear disarmament has and should continue to have.

Mr. Rodríguez-Zahar (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are speaking on behalf of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and Indonesia, sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/62/L.10, entitled "Consolidation of the regime established by the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin

America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco)". We wish to draw your attention to a revision in the middle of operative paragraph 3, where the phrase "with a view to the implementation of the agreements reached" is replaced with "to implement the declaration adopted".

Also, we would like to point out that, as a measure to revitalize the First Committee, the sponsors of the draft resolution have decided to make it a triennial item, to be placed on the agenda of the sixty-fifth session.

We would like to emphasize a fundamental principle of this resolution, namely, that militarily denuclearized zones are not a goal in themselves, but rather a means to reach a later stage, that is, general and complete disarmament. We hope that, as on past occasions, this draft resolution will be adopted without a vote.

Mr. Obisakin (Nigeria): On behalf of the African Group, we take the floor today to bring the attention of the Committee to minor technical corrections. In both operative paragraphs 5 and 9 of draft resolution A/C.1/62/L.25, on the prohibition of the dumping of radioactive wastes, the references to the Assembly's future sessions should read "sixty-fourth session". This minor correction should also be made in draft resolution L.26, on the African nuclear-weapon-free zone treaty. In operative paragraph 6 of L.26, it should also read "sixty-fourth session".

On behalf of Africa, we sincerely hope that these minor technical revisions will not pose any difficulty to any delegations and that these draft resolutions will be adopted without a vote, as has been the case before.

The Chairperson (*spoke in French*): No one else is asking to take the floor to make a general statement. We can thus advance to the stage, making decisions on the draft resolutions. So as to not disrupt this decision-making stage, perhaps at this point we should call a halt to proceedings this morning. By doing so, we can start our meeting this afternoon with the explanations of vote before the vote.

Before adjourning the meeting, I call on the Committee's Secretary for announcements.

Mr. Sareva (Secretary of the First Committee): The African Group will gather immediately following the adjournment of this meeting for a short meeting.

All African delegates are requested to attend this urgent meeting.

There is a meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement working group on disarmament today at 1.15 p.m. in the Economic and Social Council Chamber.

Document A/62/278, part II, has been issued. This is the second part of the arms trade treaty report by the Secretary-General and includes the responses from Member States. It has been now issued, and the secretariat apologizes for its late issuance.

I would also like to inform you that at the beginning of our afternoon meeting, we will distribute a revised version of informal paper 1. That revised

version will, first of all, reflect the changes announced by the Chair, namely, the fact that some drafts will be taken up at a later stage. It will also include some changes of a technical nature which we wish to include therein.

Finally, we have four new oral statements available in the secretariat and, later today, on the First Committee Quickplace. These oral statements pertain to drafts A/C.1/62/L.32, L.33, L.37 and L.39.

One final matter, we would again invite you to drop off the survey forms on your way out, at the desk at the corner of this room.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.