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First Committee

2nd meeting

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Official Records

Chairperson: Mr. Marco Antonio Suazo (Honduras)

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

Introductory statements

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): This morning, in accordance with its programme of and timetable, the First Committee will begin its general debate on all disarmament and related international security agenda items. Before we proceed with our work, I should like to make a brief statement on the matters we will address in that area.

First, let me say that it is a great honour for me to lead the work of this important Committee at the sixty-third session of the General Assembly. I am grateful for the vote of confidence that has been conferred upon me and my country, Honduras, and on the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries for its support for my candidacy. I assure the Committee that I will put all of my energy and skill into bringing our work to a successful conclusion. To that end, I issue a cordial call for cooperation and understanding in the weeks that lie ahead.

I would also like to thank the Secretariat for its support and the Office for Disarmament Affairs under the leadership of its High Representative Mr. Sergio Duarte, who works with us in the Bureau.

More than 20 years have passed since the International Conference on Disarmament and Development was held for the first time. However, we continue to face great challenges in both areas — disarmament and development. We should recall that the Millennium Declaration does not include any

paragraph on the topic of disarmament. We might consider disarmament to be the missing link in that so very important United Nations document.

Today, massive amounts of money are spent in the production and improvement of armaments, while vital investments remain inadequate to our efforts to attain the Millennium Development Goals. In August, the World Bank reported that 1.5 billion persons are living on less than \$1.25 per day. That is more than was originally thought to be the case. It indicates that, at the current rate of poverty eradication, around 1 billion will still be living on less than \$1.25 a day in 2015.

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute notes in its annual report that world military expenditures and the arms trade are both growing. World military expenditures exceeded \$1.3 trillion in 2007, while the sales of the 100 leading companies of the world reached \$315 billion in 2006 and international arms transfers grew by 7 per cent in the same year.

Are we disarming? That is the question. It is thought that there are still more than 26,000 nuclear weapons, and most people consider them to be harmful. Many have expressed their serious concern over the danger of proliferation of those weapons, particularly with respect, in our times, to non-State actors. The lack of a concrete plan for attaining nuclear disarmament is leading many to ask if it will ever be achieved. Beyond any shadow of a doubt, the situation

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does not inspire hope for progress in either disarmament and non-proliferation.

The name of this Committee in which participants represent their nations links the term “disarmament” with that of “international security”, underscoring the fact that progress in disarmament is not an end unto itself but rather a means for strengthening international peace and security. In the words of the Secretary-General, disarmament is a global public good. The First Committee should be more than a venue for sounding off our respective national points of view; it should be a common meeting point for States to explore opportunities for mutual cooperation to strengthen peace and international security.

I am convinced that we can move ahead together in that undertaking. We should pursue the positive spirit that has prevailed in this Committee, reflecting profoundly on the discussion and treatment of the substantive matters before us and promoting resolutions that will help build consensus, particularly on nuclear weapons.

To that end, we have scheduled a number of panel discussions during our thematic debates at which we will hear from experts and representatives of civil society, as well as representatives of intergovernmental arms control organizations. Most importantly, we will also hear from the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

The matters under study in this Committee are among the most complex and difficult in the United Nations. I hope that we will work for the common good. I wish also to make a cordial appeal for flexibility in delegations’ positions and, at the same time, for the maintenance of a firm defence of common multilateral interests. I hope that we can have an extremely productive session.

I now give the floor to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Sergio Duarte, who will brief us on the current developments in our field.

Mr. Duarte, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs: I welcome this opportunity to address the members of this Committee and am pleased to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your appointment to guide our work. I also wish to recognize the members of the Bureau and to assure

everyone of the fullest cooperation of the Office for Disarmament Affairs in the work ahead.

This year marks the thirtieth anniversary of the first special session on disarmament (SSOD-I), which defined the mandate of this Committee. Although SSOD-I did not address terrorism, the following paragraph from the SSOD-I Declaration raised many of the security concerns we still face today:

“Mankind today is confronted with an unprecedented threat of self-extinction arising from the massive and competitive accumulation of the most destructive weapons ever produced. Existing arsenals of nuclear weapons alone are more than sufficient to destroy all life on earth. Failure of efforts to halt and reverse the arms race, in particular the nuclear arms race, increases the danger of the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Yet the arms race continues. Military budgets are constantly growing, with enormous consumption of human and material resources. The increase in weapons, especially nuclear weapons, far from helping to strengthen international security, on the contrary weakens it. The vast stockpiles and tremendous build-up of arms and armed forces and the competition for qualitative refinement of weapons of all kinds, to which scientific resources and technological advances are diverted, pose incalculable threats to peace. This situation both reflects and aggravates international tensions, sharpens conflicts in various regions of the world, hinders the process of détente, exacerbates the differences between opposing military alliances, jeopardizes the security of all States, heightens the sense of insecurity among all States, including the non-nuclear-weapon States, and increases the threat of nuclear war.” (*Res. S-10/2, para. 11*)

Then as now, the greatest challenges come from weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, which present threats from existing arsenals and from their proliferation. Tens of thousands of such weapons remain, and there are no operational plans for disarmament. The number of States with nuclear weapons has grown. Concerns persist over nuclear activities in Iran and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. Then there is the risk of nuclear terrorism.

Yet there are still some grounds for cautious optimism. Although most statements made in the

General Assembly plenary have regrettably failed to address disarmament squarely, other aspects of the quest for progress in related areas have been identified by a large number of speakers, by civil society and by former leaders. They are also being raised in the domestic politics of States. Closing some nuclear test sites, maintaining the nuclear test moratorium, declaring reductions in deployed nuclear weapons and studying the means to verify nuclear disarmament are all welcome steps. But even greater efforts are needed, including deep cuts in nuclear arsenals, better understanding of measures already taken, operational plans for disarmament, the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and negotiation of a fissile material treaty.

Meanwhile, the Chemical Weapons Convention and Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) are approaching universal membership and strengthening the global taboo on such weapons. Last year, the new Implementation Support Unit formed a substantive secretariat for BWC meetings, which serviced the Meeting of the States Parties in 2007 and the Meetings of Experts in 2007 and 2008.

With respect to Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), efforts are under way by Governments around the world to improve national efforts to ensure that weapons of mass destruction (WMD) are not acquired by non-State actors or additional States. At the request of Member States and with their support, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) has organized several workshops to promote its full implementation.

While another year has passed without significant progress in the development of multilateral legal norms for missiles, I was pleased that the Group of Governmental Experts addressing that issue was able to adopt a report this year, which I hope will lead to additional steps in that direction.

Just as the world community must pursue nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament together, so too is it vital to address both WMD and conventional arms issues in building the architecture of international peace and security for the future. The point is not to make one form of control a precondition for the others, but rather to pursue both. We must never forget that conventional weapons take a heavy toll in human lives everywhere. Concerns over their devastating effects have inspired many international initiatives focused on,

inter alia, regulating trade in such arms, improving transparency in arms transfers, curbing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and outlawing certain types of weaponry. Recent multilateral efforts in pursuit of a possible arms trade treaty echo concerns voiced repeatedly by the Secretary-General over the recurring problem of a lack of a clear normative framework in that area. There is a compelling need for progress in all those areas.

With respect to small arms, this summer's Biennial Meeting of States to implement the United Nations Programme of Action produced a substantive outcome thanks to good preparation and rigorous process management. If States decide that one-week meetings suffice, the comprehensive preparation and management of such meetings will become even more important. To assist in implementing the Programme of Action, UNODA launched the web-based Implementation Support System, which I commend to all delegations as a central information tool for multilateral small arms control. My Office has also started to lay the foundations for regional implementation meetings to be held next year. I trust that extrabudgetary funding will be found for those events.

The problem of small arms is part of the larger problem of armed violence. It will thus require more than a narrow arms-control solution as it relates to a wide range of issues, including trade, health, development, human rights, drugs and terrorism. That approach is reflected in the Secretary-General's well-received report on small arms to the Security Council (S/2008/258).

Greater attention is also needed to the problems arising from the accumulation of surplus conventional ammunition in stockpiles. We are seeing the tragic effects of unconstrained ammunition flows, which in part leak away from poorly guarded stocks. We have witnessed stockpile explosions, often in urban areas, causing thousands of casualties. Better stockpile management is urgently needed, and this year's Group of Governmental Experts report has made good recommendations on that issue.

International efforts have also been undertaken to address the horrible effects of cluster munitions on civilian populations. In December, over 100 countries will gather in Oslo to sign the Convention on Cluster Munitions, a landmark event in the development of

global norms in that area. The United Nations will do all it can to support its noble goals, which I hope will serve as an inspiration to the States parties of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) in their efforts to deal with the dreadful effects of cluster munitions on civilians.

Also, we must also not forget reports of rising military expenditures and arms transfers. That is an area in which the United Nations has much to offer. And I am referring here to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the Standardized Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures, which will both be reviewed in the coming years. I would like to applaud those States that have contributed data to those two useful resources and to encourage others to follow their example. In an era of growing arms transfers and military expenditures, those tools are becoming all the more indispensable.

While the drafters of the Final Document of SSOD-I recognized the importance of States' political will, they also stressed that appropriate international machinery can play a significant role in disarmament. The First Committee plays a vital role in the establishment, growth and maintenance of multilateral norms in that field. In a sense, it offers a kind of barometer of the political climate in our world today and the challenges we will all face tomorrow.

Other barometers in the United Nations disarmament machinery are giving clear indications of stormy weather. The Disarmament Commission concluded its three-year cycle without any agreement on the issues on its agenda. The Conference on Disarmament, the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, was again unable to commence substantive work despite an unprecedented high level of participation by Member States and a unified effort by its six presidents.

I wish to commend the efforts of all who have worked to find common ground through the United Nations disarmament machinery. Their inability to succeed relates more to the old question of political will than to any flaw in those institutions per se. We should not blame our barometers for bad weather.

For its part, the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters has altered its working methods to allow for more in-depth deliberation. One of its recommendations was that the Secretary-General should continue strengthening his personal role in

generating political will in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Later this month, the Secretary-General will address those issues in major speeches at Harvard University and at the United Nations. Much of the analytic work in disarmament is done at the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. Its Director, Ms. Patricia Lewis, stepped down from her post in August and I wish to take this opportunity both to thank her for her many productive years of service and to wish her well in her future work. Her successor will be announced shortly.

Another key part of our machinery is the United Nations Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament, which is now marking its thirtieth anniversary. Including our current class of 25, the Programme has now trained no less than 759 officials from 159 countries, including many who are in this room today. And I warmly welcome those new additions to our growing disarmament community.

Though most of the work in disarmament is in the pursuit of multilateral goals, it continues to be true that the responsibility remains with individual States to adopt policies and laws focused on achieving such goals. That is a challenge not only for separate States, but also for regions. Arms control and disarmament issues are taken quite seriously in the regions, and UNODA's three Regional Centres in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia and the Pacific have all been working hard to meet growing demands for assistance in those areas. They have been organizing workshops and seminars and providing information and advice. They have promoted universal membership in key treaties, including the CCW and the CTBT. They have assisted States on several issues relating to small arms and light weapons. And that work has been well recognized, including by the 11 ministers of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa.

I hope to see more progress at the regional level, including full regional membership in the treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones, adherence by the nuclear-weapon States to the relevant protocols and progress in establishing new zones, particularly in the Middle East.

Delegations are aware that the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific has just opened its new office in Kathmandu. The Committee will later hear more about

that event and the recent productive work of the other Regional Centres.

I must add that the support of non-governmental groups and even individual concerned citizens is vital for progress in disarmament and non-proliferation. When the authors of the SSOD-I Final Document cited the need for political will, it inevitably implied an active role for civil society in shaping the views of their leaders. I am pleased to welcome the groups that are observing our deliberations today, and I applaud their many efforts to increase public awareness of the important work of this Committee and the issues it addresses.

One of our key activities in UNODA is to publish information on disarmament issues. This year, we are very pleased to present a new and improved edition of the *United Nations Disarmament Yearbook*, which contains more analysis than before. The *Yearbook* is on representatives' desks, together with other publications, and is also available online to make it more accessible to a wider public. I am also pleased to announce that we will soon be launching the new UNODA website.

In closing, I would like to recall the words of the current President of the General Assembly, Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, who called in his address of 16 September for "a results-based approach both to disarmament and to the regulation of armaments. Progress in that important area, as in all others, must be measured by deeds and not only by words or numbers of resolutions" (A/63/PV.1). That is sound advice indeed. Last April, our own Secretary-General stressed the vital importance of disarmament and non-proliferation in shaping international peace and security. He said: "We must all work together — the Secretariat, member States and civil society — to reinvigorate our collective efforts to reach our shared goals in those fields. Failure is not an option." (A/CN.10/PV.284, p. 2)

In that spirit, I wish the First Committee a very productive session.

The Chairperson: I thank Mr. Duarte for his remarks. I am sure that members of the Committee have taken note of the importance of the issues and the progress that we have made in those areas.

Agenda items 81 to 96

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to remind representatives of the agreement to limit statements to a maximum of 10 minutes for those speaking in their national capacity and 15 minutes for those speaking in a regional capacity, decided in our organizational discussions. In that context, I would advise representatives to pay attention to the traffic light system that the Secretariat has placed here in order to maintain an equal distribution of time so that all may participate with due respect. After the 10 or 15 minutes, the red light will be activated, and I would cordially request that the representative conclude his or her remarks at that point.

We also agreed that longer texts may be distributed and will be posted on the First Committee's Quickfirst website. Press releases will be available on the Secretariat website two hours after the representative's remarks.

Mr. De Alba (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the members of the Rio Group: Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and my country, Mexico.

The Rio Group warmly welcomes Ambassador Marco Antonio Suazo, Deputy Permanent Representative of Honduras, as Chairman of the First Committee. We particularly welcome a member of our region and our Group guiding the work of the First Committee. The Rio Group expresses its support to Ambassador Suazo and its commitment to contributing in a positive manner to the results of our deliberations. We would also like to express our appreciation to Ambassador Paul Badji, the outgoing Chairman, for his efforts and the dedication with which he conducted the work of the Committee at the previous session.

The countries of the Rio Group have a long tradition of commitment to disarmament topics, which are among our priorities on the United Nations agenda, because we recognize that disarmament and non-proliferation are essential components of the efforts to maintain international peace and security.

The Rio Group notes with concern that in recent years the disarmament machinery has made little progress in some areas and has remained stagnant in others. Faithful to our commitment to disarmament and non-proliferation, we underscore the work of the Conference on Disarmament, presided over by Ambassador Germán Mundaraín Hernández of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and support the work of the Disarmament Commission and of the Open-ended Working Group to Consider the Objectives and Agenda, including the possible establishment of the preparatory committee, for the Fourth Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament (SSOD-IV).

That is why, notwithstanding the limited progress made at the end of the Disarmament Commission's three-year cycle and in the work to convene the SSOD-IV, the Rio Group will continue working constructively towards common positions that allow progress in those processes. In particular, we hope that, in considering the agenda of the Disarmament Commission for the next cycle, consultations and exchange of points of view will take place in a transparent manner.

Our region, Latin America and the Caribbean, was the first densely populated nuclear-weapon-free zone, established by the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean — the Treaty of Tlatelolco — in 1967. As States parties to the Treaty, we urge nuclear-weapon States today to withdraw the interpretative statements made at the time of their accession to the Protocols of that Treaty. The Rio Group also renews its commitment to supporting the establishment and extension of nuclear-weapon-free zones in other parts of the world.

The Rio Group expresses its deep concern over the threat posed to humanity and to the environment by the existence of nuclear weapons and doctrines of strategic defence that envisage the accumulation, development and use of those weapons. It calls for the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons and of all military nuclear programmes.

The Rio Group is committed to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and urges all States that have not yet done so to accede to it as non-nuclear-weapon States. The three pillars of the NPT — non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy — have equal importance, and unconditional progress should be

made on all three, taking into account all the interests of the international community. That is why it is necessary to make progress on disarmament and to implement the 13 practical steps agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. In particular, we stress the need for nuclear-weapon States unequivocally to fulfil their commitment to achieving the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

The Rio Group notes with satisfaction that there has been progress in the preparation for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT. We stress the importance of establishing subsidiary organs in the main committees of the Conference to consider, among other topics, practical measures to achieve the systematic and progressive elimination of nuclear weapons, as well as negative security assurances.

The Rio Group reaffirms that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of such weapons and that non-nuclear-weapon States should receive security guarantees from the nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of such weapons. Therefore, we urge the earliest possible conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on negative security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States.

The Rio Group encourages the negotiations on denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and expresses its hope that that process can lead to the creation of an atmosphere of peace and stability on the peninsula. The Rio Group values the work being done by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the denuclearization process.

The Rio Group believes that all States parties must comply fully with every article of the NPT. In that context, we reaffirm the inalienable right of developing countries to participate in nuclear energy research, production and use for peaceful purposes without discrimination. Our Group favours the broadest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

With regard to IAEA safeguards, the Rio Group stresses the importance of achieving broader international support for the regime through the signing and subsequent ratification of such agreements. The Rio Group emphasizes that safeguards are a fundamental tool of the international community for

preventing the diversion of nuclear materials and technologies to activities that run counter to the spirit and purpose of the NPT.

The Rio Group reaffirms its support for the launching of negotiations, without preconditions, on an international treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, including an international verification regime.

The Rio Group supports the swift entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), convinced that it would limit the qualitative and quantitative development of nuclear weapons. In that connection, we note with satisfaction the ministerial meeting of States parties to the CTBT held in New York within the framework of the general debate of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session and the regional meeting on the CTBT held in San Jose, Costa Rica, on 29 and 30 September to achieve the Treaty's early entry into force. Once again, we thank the Provisional Technical Secretariat for its work to ensure prompt ratification of the Treaty, especially by countries that have difficulty doing so despite their support for its letter and spirit.

The Rio Group welcomes the ratification of the CTBT by Colombia, a State listed in Annex 2 whose ratification is required for the Treaty to enter into force, and acknowledges its efforts to find ways to take that step despite legal difficulties. In that connection, we call on all Annex 2 States that have not yet done so to ratify the Treaty as a demonstration of their political will and their commitment to international peace and security.

The total elimination of chemical and biological weapons should also be a disarmament priority, since such weapons, like nuclear weapons, are weapons of mass destruction. The Rio Group recalls that none of its members possesses any such weapons. The Group believes that it is of the utmost importance to universalize the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention, which enjoy broad international support. In that connection, we hope that the Meeting of States parties to be held in December 2008 will have positive results.

The Rio Group is concerned about the signs of an arms race in outer space and stresses that the Conference on Disarmament must begin its substantive work on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Likewise, we emphasize the importance of strict compliance with the existing legal regime on the use of outer space, recognizing the common interest of all humankind in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is a grave problem to which the international community gives special attention given the numerous deaths that it causes in our region and in other parts of the world. In that context, the Rio Group attaches great importance to the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, an essential and comprehensive tool and a reference point for the development of measures to prevent, combat and eliminate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

The Rio Group welcomes the Third Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms, held in July in this city, and the adoption of a report as its outcome. We highlight the importance of working to implement its recommendations and to establish a follow-up mechanism for the Programme. In that context, we cannot fail to mention that the issue of ammunition is also very important to the Rio Group and that progress should be made in its consideration, since it is inherently linked to the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects is a problem that profoundly affects a majority of developing countries. Every year, it claims many lives and consumes significant resources that could otherwise be allocated to development. We believe it necessary to continue working at the multilateral level in that area, making progress in the adoption of legally binding instruments on marking, tracing and illicit brokering and in the implementation of those already agreed with a view to establishing broad-based legally binding instruments in the area as a natural outcome of the Programme of Action.

Finally, the Group expresses its willingness to continue working for the adoption of joint mechanisms that can contribute to coordinated action against the scourge of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

For the Rio Group, the issue of common international norms on the import, export and transfer of conventional weapons is very important. At this sixty-third session, we will have to consider the report

of the Group of Governmental Experts established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 61/89, which must be duly discussed by Member States.

The Rio Group supports international efforts to reduce the suffering caused by cluster munitions and their use against civilian populations, in clear violation of international humanitarian law. In that connection, we note the holding of the Dublin Diplomatic Conference on Cluster Munitions in May. The Rio Group continues to call for the implementation of all provisions of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, including its Protocols.

The problems related to anti-personnel mines continue to require much attention from the international community. The Rio Group recognizes the value of the Ottawa Convention, the United Nations Mine Action Service and the Comprehensive Action against Anti-personnel Mines programme of the Organization of American States, and our members are committed to making the hemisphere a zone free of anti-personnel mines. The Rio Group stresses the importance of cooperation in mine clearance and victim assistance and hopes that the successes of recent years will be repeated.

The Rio Group believes that confidence-building measures are an important tool for achieving peace and security throughout the world and that they supplement disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. Their implementation and consolidation help to decrease uncertainty and prevent conflict, and are an effective mechanism for promoting greater political, economic and cultural integration through enhanced transparency and cooperation in the areas of defence and security.

Our region has been a pioneer in the implementation of confidence-building measures. We have watched closely their results in strengthening peace and consolidation of democracy in the Americas by enabling a broader transparency and an open dialogue among the countries in the hemisphere. Transparency in the armaments field constitutes a fundamental element of confidence-building measures.

At the regional level, we continue our efforts to reach full implementation of the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions. Meanwhile, at the international level, we

will keep our efforts to universalize the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. It is also important to encourage positive synergies between both instruments. This will allow progress in one area to be assimilated to the other, including periodic reviews of the Register as well as the coming conference of the States parties to the Convention to take place in 2009.

I see that my time has run out and so, in keeping with your request, I will conclude by asking that delegations review the rest of this statement, either in English or in Spanish, which will be made available to all present.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): I am honoured to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

Let me first congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the Chairmanship of the Committee. NAM also congratulates the other members of the Bureau on their election. We are confident that under your able leadership and with your experience, along with the efforts of your Bureau, the agenda of the First Committee will move forward. NAM assures its full support and cooperation so as to facilitate your task of presiding over our Committee at its sixty-third session.

The deteriorating situation that we face in the field of disarmament and international security is unfortunate. NAM encourages all parties to intensify their efforts to resolve the current impasse in achieving progress on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects. NAM underscores and strongly reaffirms that multilateralism and multilaterally agreed solutions, in accordance with the United Nations Charter, provide the only sustainable method of addressing disarmament and international security issues. We are determined to continue to promote multilateralism as the core principle of all our efforts and negotiations in these areas. We also underscore the Movement's principled position concerning the non-use of force or threat of use of force against the territorial integrity of any State.

NAM reaffirms the need for all States to fulfil their respective obligations in relation to arms control and disarmament and to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, in all its aspects, as well as other weapons of mass destruction. NAM reiterates that the ultimate objective of the efforts of States in the disarmament process is general and complete

disarmament under strict and effective international control.

NAM emphasizes that progress in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, in all its aspects, is essential to strengthening international peace and security. We appeal to all States to pursue and intensify multilateral negotiations, as agreed by the consensus in the Final Document of the first special session devoted to disarmament, in order to achieve nuclear disarmament under effective international control and to strengthen the international disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation regimes.

As spelled out in the Final Document of the XV Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement in Tehran on 30 July 2008, NAM reaffirms its principled position on nuclear disarmament, which remains its highest priority, and on the related issue of nuclear non-proliferation in all its aspects.

We underline our deep concern over the lack of progress by nuclear-weapon States in implementing their unequivocal undertaking, which was given in accordance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and was reaffirmed through the decisions and resolutions adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference and again in the 13 practical steps agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference aimed at the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament, to which they are committed under Article VI of the NPT.

We also reiterate our serious concern that improvements in existing nuclear weapons and their systems and the development of new nuclear weapons is in contravention of the assurances provided by nuclear-weapon States when the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) was concluded.

While noting the entry into force of the Moscow Treaty of 2002 between the Russian Federation and the United States, NAM stresses that reductions in deployments and operational status cannot substitute for irreversible cuts in, and the total elimination of, nuclear weapons. We call on the United States and the Russian Federation to apply the principles of transparency, irreversibility and verifiability to further reduce their nuclear arsenals, both warheads and delivery systems under the Treaty.

NAM believes that efforts of the international community directed at non-proliferation should be

undertaken in parallel to efforts aimed at nuclear disarmament. NAM also believes that the issue of proliferation should be resolved through political and diplomatic means and that measures and initiatives in this regard should be taken within the framework of international law, relevant multilateral conventions and the United Nations Charter.

NAM reiterates that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Therefore, pending the total elimination of such weapons, efforts to conclude a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States should be pursued as a matter of priority.

NAM remains deeply concerned at the strategic defence doctrine of nuclear-weapon States, including the NATO strategic concept, which not only sets out rationales for the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, but also maintains unjustifiable concepts with regard to international security based on promoting and developing military alliances and nuclear deterrence policies.

NAM reaffirms the need to respect the inalienable right of developing countries to engage in the research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination. NAM also emphasizes the responsibility of developed countries to support the legitimate requirements of developing countries for nuclear energy.

NAM continues to be concerned over the negative implications of the development and deployment of an anti-ballistic missile (ABM) defence and the threat of the weaponization of outer space, which have, inter alia, contributed to the further erosion of an international climate conducive to the promotion of disarmament and the strengthening of international security.

The abrogation of the ABM Treaty brings new challenges to strategic stability and the prevention of the arms race in outer space. NAM remains concerned that the implementation of a national missile defence system could trigger an arms race, as well as the development of advanced missile systems, and an increase in the number of nuclear weapons.

NAM continues to consider the establishment of the nuclear-weapon-free zones created by Treaties of

Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok, Pelindaba, Semipalatinsk and Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status as positive steps and important measures towards attaining the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We welcome efforts aimed at establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in all regions of the world and call for cooperation and broad consultation in order to achieve agreements freely arrived at among the States of the regions concerned.

NAM reiterates its support for the establishment in the Middle East of a nuclear-weapon-free zone, in accordance with Security Council resolution 487 (1981), and paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991) and the relevant General Assembly resolutions adopted by consensus.

Pending the establishment of such a zone in the Middle East, NAM demands that Israel accede to the NPT without delay and promptly place all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. NAM urges the continued consideration of the issue of Israeli nuclear capabilities in the context of IAEA.

NAM reaffirms the centrality of the First Committee as an essential subsidiary body of the General Assembly for addressing the important issues in the field of disarmament and international security, particularly given the difficult and complex situation in this field.

While underlining the role of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament, we reiterate our call on the Conference to agree on a balanced and comprehensive programme of work by, inter alia, establishing an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament as soon as possible and as a matter of the highest priority.

NAM reaffirms the importance and relevance of the United Nations Disarmament Commission as the sole specialized deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery. NAM continues to fully support the work of the Disarmament Commission and expresses regret that that Commission was unable to reach agreement on recommendations on its two agenda items during the substantive sessions of its three-year cycle ending in April 2008 owing to the lack of political will and the inflexible positions of certain nuclear weapon States. That failure has endured despite NAM's constructive role and concrete proposals throughout the deliberations, especially in

Working Group I on agenda item 4 entitled, "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons".

We call upon all States Members of the United Nations to display the necessary political will and flexibility, consistent with the relevant guidelines already adopted by the General Assembly, to achieve agreement as soon as possible on the 2009 United Nations Disarmament Commission agenda during the next cycle.

The Non-Aligned Movement stresses the importance of the General Assembly to continue its active consideration of this matter with a view to reaching consensus on the objectives, agenda and the establishment of a preparatory committee for the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, including by reconvening the Open-Ended Working Group to consider the objectives and agenda, including the possible establishment of the preparatory committee for the special session. The Non-Aligned Movement will, at an appropriate time, request the convening of the Open-Ended Working Group.

The NAM States parties to the NPT hope that the results of the first and second Preparatory Commissions could serve as building blocks for the third Preparatory Commission and the Review Conference. We reaffirm that the universality of the Treaty is an important objective, and our Group will work towards that end. We call on all States parties to the NPT to intensify their efforts towards ensuring success of the NPT Review Conference in 2010. The Movement underlines the importance of establishing subsidiary bodies to the relevant main committees of the 2010 Review Conference of the NPT to deliberate on practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons, to consider and recommend proposals on the implementation of the resolution on the Middle East adopted in the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the NPT and to consider security assurances.

We take note with concern that large stocks of nuclear weapons continue to exist, and some nuclear-weapon States are keen to develop even more sophisticated and greater arsenals of such weapons.

The Movement would like to stress the significance of achieving universal adherence to the

CTBT, including by all nuclear-weapon States, which, inter alia, should contribute to the process of nuclear disarmament. NAM reiterates that if the objectives of the Treaty were to be fully realized, the continued commitment of all signatory States to nuclear disarmament, especially the nuclear-weapon States, would be essential.

NAM States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) commends the intersessional work process as agreed in the Final Document of the 2006 BWC Review Conference. We call for an effective and verifiable BWC that is implemented in a comprehensive manner. NAM States parties to the BWC reiterate their conviction that the facilitation of, and participation in, the fullest possible exchanges and enhanced international cooperation for facilitating economic and social development are the key elements for the implementation of the Convention as a whole in a balanced and comprehensive manner. They recognize the particular importance of strengthening the Convention through multilateral negotiations to adopt a legally binding protocol and universal adherence to the Convention.

NAM States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) commends the outcome of the second Review Conference of that Convention and emphasize the role of the CWC as a disarmament treaty. They reaffirm the importance of meeting destruction deadlines. While noting the progress made by the possessor States on this matter, NAM States parties express their concern that more than 60 per cent of stockpiles still remained to be destroyed. They reaffirm the importance of international cooperation in the field of chemical activities for purposes not prohibited under the CWC.

NAM States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Landmines and on their Destruction welcome the outcome of the eighth Meeting of States Parties, which was held at the Dead Sea from 18 to 22 November 2007, and look forward to the coming ninth Meeting of the States Parties to be held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 24 to 28 November 2008.

The Movement expresses concern about the explosive remnants of the Second World War, particularly in the form of landmines that continue to cause human and material damage and obstruct

development plans in some non-aligned countries. We call on the States primarily responsible for laying those mines and leaving explosives outside their territories during the Second World War to cooperate with the affected countries and provide mine action support to those countries, including information exchange, maps indicating the locations of mines and explosives, technical assistance for mine clearance, defrayal of the costs of clearance and compensation for any losses caused by mines laid.

NAM States parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW) and its Protocols encourage States to become parties to the Convention and its additional Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War.

The Movement recognizes the adverse humanitarian impact caused by the use of cluster munitions. We stress the NAM's principled position on the central role of the United Nations in the area of disarmament and arms control. We have taken note of the continued consideration of the issue of cluster munitions in the context of the CCW. We also have taken note of the Diplomatic Conference on Cluster Munitions, held in Dublin, from 19 to 30 May 2008.

NAM remains deeply concerned about the illicit transfer, manufacture and circulation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world. The Movement takes note that the prevention of illicit trade in SALW is imperative for creating security conditions conducive to development. In this connection, we reiterate the importance of the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which we consider to be the main framework for addressing the issue of the illicit trade in these weapons. We take note of the third Biennial Meeting of States, which considered the national, regional and global implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument. We encourage all initiatives by all States to mobilize resources and expertise as well as to provide assistance to strengthen the full implementation of the Programme of Action.

The international community needs to make collective efforts to confront the serious challenges

before us. We must all work together to realize a future that is stable and free of deadly weapons. We must show greater political will to work for peace and to achieve our common objectives at this sixty-third session of the General Assembly.

Allow me to conclude by once more highlighting the need for all States to demonstrate the required political will during this session of the First Committee. For its part, NAM will actively and constructively participate in deliberations and negotiations, including by submitting resolutions in six areas: multilateralism, observance of environmental norms, depleted uranium, disarmament and development, the regional centre for peace and disarmament, and the 1925 Geneva Protocol. We will also table a decision with regard to the convening of the next special session.

Mr. Obisakin (Nigeria) (*spoke in French*): I take the floor on behalf of the Group of African States to congratulate you on your election as the Chairman of the First Committee at the sixty-third session of the General Assembly and to wish you and the other members of the Bureau every success.

(*spoke in English*)

We are confident, Sir, that you will bring your experience in the field of diplomacy to bear in steering the work of our Committee to a successful conclusion. The Group of African States hereby assures you of its unflinching support and unalloyed cooperation in addressing the tasks ahead of us.

The Group of African States wishes to associate itself with the statement of the Non-Aligned Movement just delivered by Indonesia and reiterates its commitment to the promotion of international peace and stability based on the principles of undiminished security for all States. The Group remains firm in its commitment to the achievement of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. The Group wishes to express its strong belief in the achievement of the goals, principles and objectives of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in line with the provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the commitments agreed at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference, particularly the resolution on the Middle East, as well as the agreed 13 practical steps adopted at the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty.

Africa also believes that multilateralism and solutions derived therefrom, especially within the ambit of the instrumentality of the United Nations Charter, will expedite achievement of most, if not all of our goals. We call on all delegations to demonstrate flexibility and the necessary political will to enhance progress in the issue of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The African Group remains convinced that nuclear weapons pose the greatest threat to mankind and its civilization. It is therefore imperative that the international community agree on the commencement, without further delay, of multilateral negotiations leading to an early conclusion of a convention prohibiting the development, production, testing, deployment, stockpiling, transfer, threat of use or use of nuclear weapons and on their total elimination. In order to reach the objective, the Group calls on nuclear-weapon States to commit themselves to stopping the qualitative improvement, development, production and stockpiling of nuclear warheads and their delivery systems. Pending the total elimination of those weapons, a legally binding international instrument should be established under which nuclear-weapon States undertake not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. The African Group stresses the importance of ensuring that any nuclear disarmament process is irreversible, transparent and verifiable in order for it to be meaningful and effective.

The African Group recognizes that the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament made landmark decisions in the history of multilateral efforts to achieve disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament. The Group once again wishes to express its regret at the non-implementation of the Final Document of that session (resolution S-10/2) three decades after it was adopted. The Group therefore underscores the need to convene a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in order to give real meaning to the nuclear disarmament process. In this connection, the Group welcomes the momentum generated by the Open-ended Working Group under the chairmanship of Ambassador Labbé of Chile.

The African Group reiterates its longstanding support for the total elimination of all nuclear testing. The Group stresses the significance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-

Test-Ban Treaty, including by all nuclear-weapon States, which, among other things, should contribute to the process of nuclear disarmament.

The African Group emphasizes the importance of strengthening existing multilateral arms control and disarmament agreements by ensuring full compliance with, and effective implementation of, those agreements, including their universality.

The Group also reaffirms its strong belief in strengthening the existing disarmament machinery as a means of advancing the process of nuclear disarmament. The Group calls on the Conference on Disarmament, as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament, to agree on a work programme as soon as possible so that substantive negotiations can start.

The African Group laments the lack of any substantive progress in the previous cycle of the Disarmament Commission and calls upon all Member States to show flexibility and adequate political will to create the atmosphere sufficiently favourable to consensus during the forthcoming cycle of negotiations.

The African Group reiterates its support for the concept of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the regions concerned. We appeal to all stakeholders for the ratification of the Treaty of Pelindaba, on the establishment of an African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, by the required number of States so that it can enter into force without further delay.

The African Group calls on States to take appropriate measures to prevent any dumping of nuclear, chemical and radioactive wastes that would infringe on the sovereignty of States. The Group also calls for the effective implementation of the International Atomic Energy Agency Code of Practice on the International Transboundary Movement of Radioactive Waste as a means of enhancing the protection of all States from the dumping of radioactive waste on their territories.

The African Group wishes to express its concern at the illicit transfer, manufacture and circulation of small arms and light weapons. In this connection, the Group wishes to state that the framework of the Third Biennial Meeting of States on national and regional

implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects, should be pursued with vigour. Africa also wishes to draw attention to the necessity of focusing more on the needs of the developing countries for technical and financial empowerment to enable them to adequately address the threat of illicit small arms and light weapons.

Africa wishes to underscore the inalienable rights of the developing countries to equally engage in research on and production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes — I stress “peaceful purposes”.

We would like to express appreciation for the renewed impetus recently given to the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, in Lomé, to enable it to play an important role in promoting peace, security, arms control and disarmament. However, we believe that the Centre still needs the continuing support of the United Nations.

In conclusion, the African Group wishes to appeal to all delegations to demonstrate sufficient flexibility and the requisite political goodwill during this session of the First Committee negotiations. For its part, the African Group will like to assure the Committee once again of its readiness to participate fully and constructively in all negotiations.

Mr. Danon (France) (*spoke in French*): I am speaking on behalf of the European Union. Candidate countries Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and prospective candidates Albania and Serbia; and Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

The European Union is deeply committed to the development of an effective multilateral system. We hope that international organizations, regimes and international treaties can play their full role in the face of the threat to international peace and security and that every effort is made to ensure full compliance with the obligations of the treaties and multilateral agreements on disarmament and non-proliferation. That is why the European Union considers that the strengthening of the authority of the United Nations should be a priority for all countries. In that context, the work of the First Committee and its ability to interact with other relevant United Nations bodies are of the utmost importance.

It is undeniable that international security continues to be compromised and threatened both globally and regionally by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery and by the risk of non-State actors gaining access to such weapons. The discovery on a number of occasions of clandestine nuclear activities is a matter of great concern for the international community, as is the proliferation of ballistic missiles of increasingly great range.

The European Union is fully committed to maintaining, implementing and strengthening disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and agreements. Progress in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation is needed, in accordance with existing relevant international instruments and by negotiating new treaties, such as a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

The EU's actions are guided by the strategy against proliferation of weapons of mass destruction under which it is committed to act with resolve by using all instruments and policies at its disposal to prevent, deter, halt and, if possible, put an end to proliferation programmes.

In line with that strategy, the EU is resolved to pursue its action against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, which is potentially the greatest threat to our security. We are resolved to achieve universal adherence to the multilateral treaties in that field and to strengthen the non-proliferation regime.

However, strengthening and achieving greater adherence to the standards is not sufficient — they must be complied with. That is why the EU attaches particular importance to the need to enhance detection of violations as a means of reinforcing compliance with the obligations under the multilateral treaty regime. In that regard, it is essential to make the best use of existing verification mechanisms and, where necessary, to establish additional verification instruments.

The EU supports strengthening the role of the Security Council, whose primary responsibility is maintaining international peace and security, so that it can take appropriate actions in the event of non-compliance, inter alia, with obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

It also emphasizes the essential and unique role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in monitoring compliance by States with their nuclear non-proliferation undertakings and urges all States that have not yet done so to sign and bring into force the safeguards agreements and additional protocols that constitute the current IAEA verification standard.

Likewise, the European Union attaches particular importance to the verification regime established by the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), implemented by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which makes it possible to ensure compliance with the destruction obligations of States that have declared themselves to be in possession of chemical weapons, as well as with obligations concerning the non-proliferation of those weapons. The EU recalls that the challenge inspection mechanism is an essential and readily available instrument of that regime. Similarly, the strengthening of instruments of verification of activities not prohibited by CWC should remain a long-term objective.

The EU reiterates its commitment to the continuation of efforts to identify, in the long term, an effective mechanism for strengthening and verifying compliance with the Biological Weapons Convention. The EU also reaffirms its commitment to rigorous national export controls that are coordinated internationally.

The EU attaches great importance to the fight against terrorism. It supports all measures designed to prevent terrorists from acquiring nuclear, biological and chemical weapons or connected materials, their means of delivery and radiological material. Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and subsequent resolutions 1673 (2006) and 1810 (2008) play a crucial role in that respect, and we call on all States to implement them fully.

We congratulate the Security Council Committee established pursuant to Council resolution 1540 (2004) on its activities in support of the resolution and call on it to continue to step up its efforts, paying particular attention to regions where the need to apply the resolution is most pressing. The EU is ready to continue to provide its assistance, particularly with a view to developing the necessary legal and administrative infrastructure. The EU fully supports the objectives of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism and the Proliferation Security Initiative,

which bear testimony to the efforts of the international community to prevent and counter the growing threat of nuclear terrorism. We must pursue our efforts in that area.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty, based on the three mutually reinforcing pillars of non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy, represents a unique and irreplaceable multilateral framework for maintaining and strengthening international peace, security and stability. The Treaty remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, as well as the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament in accordance with article VI. It is an important element in the development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Given the current challenges in the field of international security, in particular the risk of proliferation, we are convinced that the NPT is now more important than ever. It is our duty to maintain and strengthen its authority and integrity. To that end, the EU will continue to promote all the objectives of the Treaty. We will continue to work towards the universality of the NPT, and we call on all States not yet party to the NPT to join it as non-nuclear-weapon States.

The EU welcomes the satisfactory conclusion of the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, held in Geneva from 28 April to 9 May 2008. The EU will continue to work for the successful outcome of the current review cycle, with a view in particular to strengthening the non-proliferation regime. The EU will strive to ensure that the 2010 Conference examines in a balanced, effective, concrete and pragmatic manner the means of stepping up international efforts in the struggle against proliferation, pursuing disarmament and ensuring the responsible development of peaceful uses of nuclear energy by countries wishing to develop their capacities in that field.

On the basis of its 2005 common position, which it stands by, the EU remains fully committed to work to strengthen the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. The EU continues to support the decisions and the resolution adopted by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and the Final Document of the

2000 NPT Review Conference (NPT/CONF.2000/28 (Parts I and II)), bearing in mind the current situation.

The EU notes that serious proliferation challenges have emerged in recent years and calls on the international community to face them with conviction and to tackle with resolve any new challenges of that kind in the years to come.

In adopting the sanctions resolution 1835 (2008) on the Iranian nuclear programme on the basis of Article 41 in Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, the Security Council again sent a firm message to Iran on the international community's resolve. We deplore Iran's persistent failure to comply with the requirements of the Security Council and the IAEA Board of Governors by refusing to suspend enrichment, to shed full light on its past and present activities and to grant IAEA the access and cooperation that it has demanded to resolve the outstanding questions mentioned in its reports, in order to restore confidence.

The EU is particularly concerned by the latest report of the IAEA Director General, of 15 September (GOV/2008/38). It shares the IAEA Director General's serious concern at Iran's failure to reply to questions about possible activities in relation to the design and manufacture of nuclear weapons. We urge Iran to comply with the demands of the Security Council and IAEA, including the suspension of enrichment-related activities, reprocessing activities and all heavy-water projects.

The EU remains committed to finding rapidly a negotiated solution to the Iranian nuclear dossier, and we reaffirm our firm commitment to a dual approach. We call on Iran to open the way to negotiations by complying with Security Council resolutions 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007), 1803 (2008) and 1835 (2008). We reiterate our support for the proposals put to Iran in June 2006 by the Secretary-General and the EU High Representative and extended in a revised offer delivered to Iran on 14 June 2008.

The EU continues to support the Six-Party Talks process and the aim of the denuclearization of North Korea in accordance with Security Council resolution 1718 (2006). We are particularly concerned by the recent announcement by North Korea that it is restarting its reactor at Yongbyon. The EU stresses the importance of swift and complete compliance with the commitments set out in the Joint Statement of 19 September 2005 with a view to the complete,

verifiable and irreversible dismantling of the military nuclear programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The EU calls on the Democratic People's Republic to comply fully with Security Council resolutions 1695 (2006) and 1718 (2006) and with its obligations under the NPT, including implementation of its comprehensive safeguards agreement with IAEA. The EU recalls the obligation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea not to engage in sensitive exports leading to proliferation.

The EU has noted with concern the statement by the Director General of IAEA of 25 April 2008 on allegations concerning an undeclared nuclear reactor in Syria. It welcomes the fact that at the end of June IAEA decided to carry out investigations into that and calls on Syria to cooperate fully with the Agency, so that it can comply with its mandate in satisfactory conditions. The EU is looking forward to IAEA's report on its inspection.

The EU stresses the need to work for general disarmament. Non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control, like confidence, transparency and reciprocity, are crucial elements of collective security. We welcome the nuclear disarmament measures taken by the two EU nuclear-weapon States and their initiatives in that area.

The EU invites the international community to support specific and realistic disarmament initiatives by promoting, in particular: the universal ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the completion of its verification regime, and the dismantling, as soon as possible, of all nuclear testing facilities in a manner that is transparent and open to the international community; the opening, without delay or preconditions, of the negotiations for a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and the implementation of an immediate moratorium on production of such material; the establishment of confidence and transparency measures by the nuclear Powers; further progress in current discussions between the United States and Russia on the development of a legally binding, post-START arrangement and an overall reduction in the global stockpile of nuclear weapons, in accordance with article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), particularly for the States that have the largest arsenals; the inclusion of tactical nuclear weapons by those States that have them in global arms control and disarmament processes with a view to their reduction and elimination; the start of

consultations on a treaty banning short- and medium-range surface-to-surface missiles; the adherence to and implementation by all of The Hague Code of Conduct; and beyond this, mobilization in all other areas of disarmament.

The EU places the utmost importance on the earliest possible entering into force of the CTBT and the completion of its verification regime. Renewed momentum towards the entering into force of the Treaty is perceptible and we must reinforce it, especially in the context of the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference.

We therefore repeat our call to all States that have not yet done so, in particular those States in Annex 2 of the CTBT, which must be ratified to enter into force, to sign and ratify the Treaty without delay and unconditionally. Pending the entry into force of the Treaty we call on all States to uphold a moratorium and to desist from any action contrary to obligations and provisions of the Treaty. Furthermore, the EU urges the States concerned to dismantle, as soon as possible, all their nuclear-testing facilities in a manner which is transparent and open to the international community.

The EU is convinced that a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices will contribute significantly to nuclear disarmament efforts, under article 6 of the NPT. Logically, such a treaty is the next multilateral instrument to be negotiated in the nuclear disarmament field. The EU therefore attaches a clear priority to negotiation without preconditions in the Conference of Disarmament of such a treaty. The EU would emphasize here the importance of the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral forum available to the international community for disarmament negotiations.

The EU has constantly sought to secure the adoption of a programme of work for the Conference and will spare no effort to revitalize this unique forum so that negotiations can resume their substantive work. In this respect, the EU has indicated that it could accept proposal 1840 as it stands, and has thus demonstrated its goodwill and determination to find a way out of the current stalemate. We are convinced that the content of the 1840 proposal, considering a programme of work for the Conference provides it a real opportunity to resume its negotiating role.

The EU feels, moreover, that it is time to finalize concrete measures regarding multilateral approaches to the fuel cycles. Balanced multilateral mechanisms would contribute significantly to allaying recipient countries' concerns regarding the security of supplies by facilitating access to nuclear fuel and associated services, lessening the need to invest in complex and costly fuel-cycle technologies and reducing concerns about proliferation and nuclear safety.

The EU, therefore, is currently attentively considering the possibility of making a financial contribution to the ambitious project for a fuel bank under the aegis of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Activities in outer space are also an important security question, raising sensitive issues. In this connection, we understand the concerns expressed by a number of States. The EU stresses that the prevention of an arms race in outer space is an essential prerequisite for the strengthening of strategic stability and for the promotion of international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes. As actors in the field of space, we are particularly sensitive to the issue of the security of space activities for peaceful purposes and we urge all Member States to refrain from undertaking actions likely to undermine it, especially by creating additional debris.

The proliferation of missiles that could be used as weapons delivery systems for weapons of mass destruction is also a matter of major concern for international security. The EU continues to believe that The Hague Code of Conduct, together with the Missile Technology Control Regime, represent the best existing tools to deal with the problem of missile proliferation and is fully committed to the adherence to and implementation of the Code of Conduct by all States.

The EU considers that it is necessary to reaffirm the Code's clear, multilateral and universal purpose. In this context, the EU will be submitting a draft resolution on the Code for consideration by the First Committee. However, the EU would also like to explore ways of strengthening the campaign against that threat.

Due to time constraints, I will simply conclude with one sentence. The European Union, as a permanent partner of multilateralism, believes that the General Assembly and its First Committee and their

Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the various international treaties, together with their bodies and consideration processes are mutually reinforcing. For the rest of my statement please refer to the text that I have circulated.

The Chairperson (*spoke in French*): I think that we need to respect the rights of all speakers and to be respectful of one another. We need to comply with the basic code of conduct. Otherwise, it will not be possible to ensure that we can conclude the session in a timely manner. I would like to call upon all delegations to comply with the decision that they themselves made in agreeing upon time limits for both regional and national statements.

Mr. Gumbi (South Africa): I am taking the floor to speak on behalf of the partners of the New Agenda Coalition, namely, Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Sweden and South Africa. At the outset, Sir, I wish to congratulate you on your assumption of the Chairmanship of the 2008 session of the First Committee and to assure you of the Coalition's wholehearted support for all your efforts to steer our deliberations to a successful conclusion.

The New Agenda Coalition has always been an unwavering supporter of nuclear disarmament and a proponent of a nuclear-weapon-free world. The Coalition has therefore consistently sought to actively engage in, and contribute to, the important issues of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. To this end, we have expressed our views and shared our ideas in a variety of multilateral disarmament forums, including the United Nations First Committee and the various meetings of the parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). These contributions remain valid.

To the NAC it is obvious that the only absolute guarantee against the use of nuclear weapons is their complete elimination and the assurance that they will never be produced again. Following this logic, it should be equally clear that as long as some countries possess nuclear weapons, there will be others who will aspire to acquire them. The continued possession of nuclear weapons, or the retention of the nuclear weapons option by some States, creates the very real danger that they may be used or fall into the hands of non-State actors. The Coalition therefore does not subscribe to the view that the possession of nuclear

weapons — or the pursuit of such possession by certain States — enhances international peace and security.

Against this background, there can be no doubt that the NPT is of vital importance to achieve nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. It remains the only international instrument that not only seeks to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, but also contains the legal commitment for the elimination of these weapons. As such, it therefore represents a historical bargain between the nuclear-weapon States and the non-nuclear-weapon States, in terms of which the latter have undertaken not to develop nuclear weapons, based upon the undertaking by the former to eliminate such weapons.

While the NPT remains the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime, few would argue that the primary goal of the States parties to the Treaty — that of achieving its full implementation and its universality — does not face challenges. Few also would disagree that the period since 1995 and 2000 has witnessed developments that did not always contribute positively towards the goals of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. Nevertheless, it would be fair to say that the overwhelming majority of States parties to the NPT remain committed to fulfilling their Treaty obligations.

Given the importance that the New Agenda Coalition attaches to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, this year's New Agenda Coalition draft resolution in the First Committee — which will be submitted in due course — continues to emphasize the central role of the Treaty and its universality in achieving nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. It also recalls the three decisions, on strengthening the review process for the treaty, principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the resolution on the Middle East, adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference, and the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

The New Agenda Coalition partners firmly believe that these outcomes contain a step-by-step process that outlines detailed elements in the areas of both nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation in a balanced way that would reduce the threat posed by nuclear weapons, de-emphasize their importance and lead to their elimination.

The New Agenda Coalition continues to view the issues of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation as inextricably linked and wishes to stress that both, therefore, require continuous and irreversible progress. The Coalition welcomed the opportunity to participate in the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference, which was held in Geneva from 28 April to 9 May.

In view of the approaching 2010 Review Conference, the Coalition urges States parties to intensify their constructive engagement in the work of the Preparatory Committee at its third session, to be held in 2009, with a view to identifying and addressing specific aspects where urgent progress is required in order to advance the objective of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Given the need for a constructive and successful preparatory process that will contribute to strengthening the Treaty in all its aspects, the New Agenda Coalition, furthermore, calls upon all States parties to fully implement all the commitments undertaken by them at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

The New Agenda Coalition recognizes the efforts undertaken during the course of this year to achieve the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula in a peaceful manner. We would, however, urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to rescind its announced withdrawal from the NPT and to verifiably terminate its nuclear weapons programme. We also continue to urge India, Israel and Pakistan to accede to the Treaty as non-nuclear-weapon States promptly and without conditions.

The New Agenda Coalition welcomed the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States at the 2000 NPT Review Conference to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. As the primary responsibility for undertaking the necessary steps for the elimination of nuclear weapons lies with the nuclear-weapon States, the New Agenda Coalition believes that it is incumbent upon those States to accelerate the implementation of their nuclear disarmament commitments in order to make further progress towards achieving our common goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

The need to diminish the role of nuclear weapons in security policies remains an essential component in the nuclear disarmament process, not only in order to enhance strategic stability, but also to facilitate the process of the elimination of nuclear weapons and to contribute to a climate of international confidence and security. In addition, the taking of further practical steps to decrease the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems, with a view to ensuring that all nuclear weapons are removed from high-alert status, will contribute to nuclear disarmament through the enhancement of confidence-building and transparency measures and will reinforce a diminishing role for nuclear weapons in security policies.

Furthermore, as transparency and confidence-building constitute one of the key areas in the nuclear disarmament debate, the New Agenda Coalition welcomes all efforts towards greater transparency undertaken by some of the nuclear-weapon States during the course of this year. In that regard, the New Agenda Coalition encourages initiatives for greater transparency and continues to believe that there would be merit in pursuing progress on such initiatives in the lead-up to the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

The provision of further clarity on the current status of holdings, plans for downsizing and the reduction of reliance on nuclear weapons in security doctrines, would certainly contribute to furthering confidence that expanded roles for nuclear weapons in security doctrines will not be developed.

Genuine security cannot be achieved solely by the non-nuclear-weapon States abandoning the nuclear weapons option. What is also required is for such States not to feel threatened by nuclear weapons. In that regard, the New Agenda Coalition holds the view that the granting of legally binding security assurances to the non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT would fulfil an undertaking to those States that have voluntarily given up the nuclear-weapons option by becoming parties to the Treaty. We therefore reaffirm that security assurances should be provided in the context of an internationally legally binding instrument.

The Coalition furthermore continues to support the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones as a step in the process towards a world free from nuclear weapons. In that regard, it remains important to continue promoting greater cooperation and

consultation among the existing nuclear-weapon-free zones. The New Agenda Coalition therefore supports efforts to promote the convening of a second nuclear-weapon-free zone conference as a contribution to the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

Time unfortunately does not allow me to comment on each and every aspect of the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation debate, but it would be remiss of me not to place on record the Coalition's continued and firm support for a treaty that would ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

On behalf of the New Agenda Coalition, I would likewise reiterate the continued importance of the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to the advancement of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation objectives.

The partners of the New Agenda Coalition remain concerned at the slow and sometimes tortuous pace of progress with regard to nuclear disarmament. The New Agenda Coalition has on numerous occasions, and in various disarmament forums, called for progress in the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and a nuclear-weapon-free world. The Coalition will continue along this path, and in so doing will also continue to promote the full implementation and universality of the NPT as the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, Mr. Chairperson, to commend you on your election to guide our work and to assure you of our full cooperation.

(*spoke in English*)

Brazil fully associates itself with the views expressed by Ambassador Luis Alfonso de Alba of Mexico on behalf of the Rio Group and by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition.

Let me express our appreciation for the work carried out by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ambassador Sergio Duarte, and his Office.

The lack of progress on disarmament and non-proliferation in the multilateral field during the past three years is disappointing. A succession of setbacks well known to all of us sends a worrisome

signal of insufficient commitment to multilateralism as the means to effectively tackle security concerns common to humankind.

Brazil acknowledges some positive movements, such as the reductions of nuclear arsenals achieved over the past decade and the recent joint statement by the five permanent members of the Security Council, made at the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, held last May, in which those countries reiterated their enduring commitment to the fulfilment of their obligation under article VI of the NPT.

But much remains to be done. So long as the States that possess nuclear weapons continue to believe that those weapons constitute a critical element of their security strategy, the goal of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons will remain elusive and distant.

The NPT is the essential bedrock of our global security regime. The three pillars of the Treaty — non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament and peaceful uses of nuclear energy — have been indispensable in attracting near-universal membership. Indeed, without any one of those pillars, there would not have been an NPT. Respect for the principles contained in the Treaty and the commitments agreed to by all States parties in previous Review Conferences are essential elements for the NPT to last.

Brazil has a solid and long-standing record in the defence of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We helped to establish the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in an inhabited region of the world through the Treaty of Tlatelolco, now ratified by all countries of the region. Along with our partners in the New Agenda Coalition, we consider the pursuit of nuclear disarmament to be a fundamental tool in addressing the international community's deep concern about proliferation. Nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing processes.

The NPT provides a framework of confidence and cooperation within which the development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes can take place. Brazil believes there should be no unwarranted restrictions on the inalienable right of all parties in this regard. Concerning the current discussions on the nuclear fuel cycle, it is imperative to steer clear of the creation of another kind of cartel that would exclude full participation of developing countries.

We fully agree with the assessment that terrorism and the risks of further proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are prominent contemporary threats to international peace and security. Of utmost concern is indeed the possibility that non-State actors might acquire and use such weapons. We must steadfastly work to prevent this scenario from happening, while acting strictly within the principles and norms of international law.

In this context, Brazil welcomes the recent joint ministerial statement on the comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), adopted in September. We call upon those States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the CTBT unconditionally and without delay and to observe a moratorium on nuclear tests pending the entry into force of the Treaty.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones also play a key role in the efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. As a signal of our determination to continue to work towards freeing the entire Southern Hemisphere of nuclear weapons, Brazil, together with New Zealand, will once again be submitting a draft resolution on this issue to the First Committee.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is a matter of great concern to us, not only for its adverse effects at the international level, but also for its impact on our national public security. In this context, the adoption of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects confirms the irreplaceable role of multilateralism in addressing global challenges through globally coordinated responses.

After the lack of results at the 2006 Review Conference, we welcome the fact that a substantive outcome was reached at the third Biennial Meeting of States, held last July. The final document (see A/CONF.192/BMS/2008/3) contains an interesting array of recommendations that should merit our full consideration with a view to enhancing the implementation of the Programme of Action. At this session of the General Assembly, we favour the adoption of a resolution that recognizes the progress made and seeks to build upon it.

This year, consultations were held on the possibility of a future arms trade treaty. We are committed to the goal of concluding an effective, balanced, non-discriminatory and legally binding

multilateral instrument on the international trade in conventional arms. One of the core goals of an arms trade treaty must be to prevent conventional weapons from being diverted to illicit purposes, without prejudice to the right of States to produce, acquire and maintain such weapons for self-defence in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter. In order to achieve that result, the future international instrument must rely on objective criteria for the authorization of arms transfers, and also on practical measures aimed at preventing diversion. International cooperation and assistance in capacity-building must be a major component of a future agreement.

We welcome the work of the Group of Governmental Experts regarding a future arms trade treaty and its recommendation that, in view of the complexity of the issue of conventional arms transfers, further consideration be given to this matter within the United Nations. We hope that, at its current session, the General Assembly will follow up on that recommendation and adopt a resolution that will enable discussions to continue in a multilateral setting with the benefit of the participation of all Member States.

We must recommit ourselves to working constructively together in good faith to overcome the deadlock that has impaired the disarmament machinery over the past decade. It is a matter of concern that yet again the Disarmament Commission has concluded its three-year cycle without a substantive outcome. This prolonged failure leads to mistrust and insecurity. A healthy institutional framework that is effective in promoting meaningful negotiations must be restored. This endeavour deserves our best collective efforts.

Mr. Wang Qun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation wholeheartedly congratulates you, Sir, on your election to the Chairmanship of the First Committee at the sixty-third session of the General Assembly.

The world today is in a state of great transformation, and the international security situation itself is undergoing profound and complicated changes. The global security situation is stable on the whole, although in some hot spots there still exist turbulent and destabilizing factors that have a bearing on international and regional trends.

As recent developments show, there is a genuine need for the international community to review and reflect on the concept of international security in the

new security environment. It is the common aspiration of the international community to maintain peace and stability and to promote development and cooperation. Although most States express their readiness to promote the international arms control and disarmament process, consensus remains elusive on the ways and means to achieve that.

China maintains that, to realize enduring peace and equitable development throughout the world, the international community should, through friendly cooperation, promote equality and democracy in international politics, mutual trust and cooperation in the security sphere, mutual benefit and cooperation in the economic area, and exchanges and joint progress in the realm of culture. Those principles are not only the gist of the “harmonious world” concept championed by China, but also represent its answer to the various new and old challenges that the world is facing today.

To enhance international security, galvanize global consensus and reinvigorate the international arms control and disarmament process, China believes that efforts should be made in the following areas.

First, we need to promote common security for all countries through an approach emphasizing mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination, so as to eradicate the root causes of problems endangering peace and stability. Any country or group of countries, while safeguarding its own security, should take into account and fully respect the legitimate security concerns of others. Behaviours ignoring or even harming the security interests of other countries or regions will eventually damage and undermine the credibility of relevant international laws and may, in turn, undermine the security of all countries involved.

Secondly, we must work to maintain global strategic stability, continue to move the nuclear disarmament process forward and reduce the role of nuclear weapons in national security. Countries possessing the largest nuclear arsenals should dramatically reduce their nuclear arsenals in a verifiable and irreversible manner. The international community should effectively prevent the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space and should ensure the peaceful use of outer space. The creation and deployment of a global missile defence system and cooperation on such a system in certain areas is detrimental not only to strategic stability and balance and to international arms control and

non-proliferation efforts, but also to regional stability and mutual trust among States.

Thirdly, we need to work to resolve disputes concerning the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction through dialogue and negotiation, addressing both the symptoms and the root causes. In order to properly address and resolve the relevant hot-spot issues in the area of non-proliferation, it is equally important for the relevant countries to promote bilateral relationships. Double standards should be abandoned, the impartiality and non-discriminatory character of non-proliferation efforts should be preserved and the relationship between non-proliferation and the right to peaceful use should be handled in a balanced way.

Fourthly, we need to adhere to multilateralism, to safeguard and strengthen the existing international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation regimes and to reinvigorate the traditional arms control and disarmament bodies. In that context, efforts should be made to enhance the authority, effectiveness and universality of arms control and non-proliferation treaties such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention.

China unswervingly pursues a path of peaceful development, an independent foreign policy of peace and a national defence policy which is purely defensive in nature. China both participates in and helps to define the international regime, and advocates and promotes the international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation process. China has never evaded its due responsibilities and obligations in attaining progress in international security and multilateral arms control, and has made its own contribution to it for years.

As a nuclear-weapon State, China has always stood for the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons. China is the only one of the five nuclear-weapon States that has committed itself to non-first-use of nuclear weapons and non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones. China has exercised the utmost restraint on the scale and development of its nuclear weapons. China has never participated in the nuclear arms race and never will.

China attaches great importance to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as

the cornerstone of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. China is willing to work with all other parties to promote a positive outcome of the new round in the NPT review process on the basis of treating the three main goals of the NPT in a balanced manner.

China is willing to make concerted efforts with all other States to promote the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. China wishes to see early agreement on a comprehensive and balanced programme of work and, on that basis, to start all relevant work in the Conference on Disarmament, including the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty.

China is firmly opposed to proliferation activities in all their manifestations. China has already established a comprehensive export control system for nuclear, biological, chemical, missile and other sensitive items and technologies as well as all military products. China has also adopted a series of measures to ensure the effective enforcement of those regulations. China actively takes part in international cooperation on non-proliferation, participates in all relevant international treaties and organizations in the non-proliferation field and strictly carries out its obligations.

China has consistently opposed the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space and has made unremitting efforts in that area. In February 2008, China and the Russia Federation jointly submitted a draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and the threat or use of force against outer space objects and have actively promoted substantive discussions on it at the Conference on Disarmament. China will continue to work with all other States to make contributions to the prevention of the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space.

China attaches great importance to humanitarian issues in the field of conventional weapons and has consistently supported all the international community's efforts to deal with issues such as landmine, cluster munitions and small arms and light weapons.

China welcomes the encouraging progress made in the third Biennial Meeting to Consider 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. China plays a constructive role in the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on cluster munitions of the States parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

China attaches great importance to military transparency and is actively committed to promoting mutual trust among countries in the field of security. China continued this year to report to the United Nations its military expenditures and provided the requested 2007 data for the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. In addition to providing basic data on our 2007 military expenditure, China also elaborated on the main purposes of those expenditures, which again shows the positive attitude of the Chinese Government to gradually enhance its military transparency in keeping with its own situation.

China has been consistently dedicated to realizing the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and maintaining peace and stability in the peninsula and throughout North-East Asia. With the joint efforts of all parties involved, the Six-Party Talks have achieved some fresh progress while, at the same time, confronting some difficulties. China will continue its close coordination and cooperation with all the other parties concerned in promoting further progress and maintaining the peace, security and stability of the peninsula and of North-East Asia.

China has always stood for a peaceful resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue through political and diplomatic means and has been actively participating in relevant diplomatic efforts. As the Iranian nuclear issue is now at a critical juncture, all the parties involved should exercise more patience, step up diplomatic efforts and continue the dialogue and negotiation so as to seek an appropriate comprehensive, long-term solution. China will continue to play a constructive role in that regard.

The theme of the 2008 Olympic Games was “One World, One Dream”. In that spirit, China is ready to make unremitting efforts, with all other States, towards realizing the dreams shared by all peoples around the world: lasting peace, common development and win-win cooperation.

Mr. De Alba (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, Sir, I would like to personally congratulate you, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. In my national capacity, I would like also

to congratulate the Vice-Chairpersons and the Rapporteur. As you know, Ambassador Suazo, you have the full and unconditional support of the Mexican delegation — and of me personally.

We associate ourselves with the Rio Group statement, which I myself made, and with the statement made a few minutes ago by my colleague from South Africa on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition.

In my national capacity, I would like to focus on three points.

First, I would like to note that all States Members of the United Nations are facing important challenges on disarmament and international security issues. Every year we seem to be confronted with new challenges, and my delegation is not convinced that we are taking the right steps to address them.

During recent months, we have seen new tensions emerging in the world and we have been watching with concern the return of a language in which a structure of deterrence based on military power prevails over the political and diplomatic channels for the settlement of disputes. Mexico hopes that the situation of international peace and security will evolve in a positive way, and that everyone will show willingness to fulfil on an equal basis all their obligations on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

Paradoxically, also in recent years, we have observed a number of positive signs, and my delegation would like to focus on these points in this segment of the debate.

Mexico believes that the steps now being taken in the preparation process of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) have been positive. We note with satisfaction that States have shown flexibility and political will to reach agreements in form and we hope that that spirit remains in the substantive matters during the third Preparatory Committee and in the Review Conference itself.

Mexico would like to focus on ensuring a Review Conference that can find the appropriate balance between the three pillars of the Treaty: complete nuclear disarmament — and I underline the word “complete” — non-proliferation without exceptions, and the truly peaceful development of nuclear energy. We wish to underscore the authentic nature of that commitment.

A great number of the States represented here today have, for 40 years, met the obligations contained in the NPT on the peaceful use of nuclear energy and non-proliferation. We therefore feel that the nuclear Powers should assume the same level of commitment, destroy their arsenals and inform the international community of the progress made in that endeavour with transparency. We must recognize that to the degree these nuclear arsenals are kept in place, no effort in the area of non-proliferation will be sufficient for the elimination of nuclear weapons risks.

Another topic that it will be essential to address during the Review Conference, in the opinion of Mexico, is that of the contribution of the nuclear-weapon-free zones to disarmament and non-proliferation. Mexico is promoting a second conference in 2010 and encourages greater cooperation between different zones.

In the framework of conventional weapons, the international community has, in our opinion, taken a great step forward in negotiating and adopting in record time the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which is a landmark in the development and codification of international humanitarian law and in the area of arms control.

Mexico believes that the Oslo process was an important learning opportunity that showed that, through political will and joint efforts with active participation from civil society and other international stakeholders, it is possible to overcome differences and bring together everyone's interests. Once it has entered into force, the Convention will help to prevent damage to the civilian population during armed conflict and in the post-conflict stage.

The Convention incorporates a broad concept of assistance to victims that addresses the person directly affected, their families and the community. It creates robust cooperation mechanisms on the international level for the collection and destruction of these instruments of war, establishes the obligation to follow an eight-year timetable for the destruction of current arsenals, prohibits around 95 per cent of cluster munitions that are currently being used, and recognizes the responsibility of States that have used cluster munitions in other States, setting forth the requirement that such States should participate in the tasks of eliminating and destroying these weapons.

Mexico calls upon all States to affirm or, where appropriate, ratify this instrument as quickly as

possible. As regards the negotiations of a sixth protocol, one on cluster munitions, within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, Mexico will continue to strive to ensure that the high standards achieved within the framework of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, to which I just referred, remain an essential reference point during those negotiations.

Mexico would also like to acknowledge its appreciation for the political will and efforts of States to draft and adopt the report of the third Biennial Meeting of States to consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action on Small and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. That report, even though it is not ambitious, is a good starting point for progressing in that area.

Mexico will be very active in the work of the current session of the First Committee and will attempt to include in the pertinent resolutions the agreements reached during the Biennial Meeting, particularly those regarding the follow-up mechanism for the Programme of Action to establish mechanisms that allow for adequate control of intermediation activities. We will also insist on the need to implement efficient measures for controlling possession of firearms by civilians in order to prevent their diversion towards illegal trafficking channels. We will also look to promote the adoption of concrete measures to address the humanitarian aspects of the Programme of Action.

Lastly, Mexico will promote a legally binding instrument on arms trade, following its sponsorship of resolution 61/89 and after having actively participated in the Group of Governmental Experts that reviewed the feasibility, scope and parameters of a possible treaty. Therefore, Mexico awaits with particular interest the presentation of the report to this Committee.

Ms. Blum (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. Chairperson, I would like first to congratulate and welcome you and the other members of the Bureau on your election to guide the work of this Committee. I take this opportunity also to thank the outgoing Chairperson for his efforts and for the dedication with which he guided our work in the past session.

Colombia aligns itself with the statements made by the Mexican delegation on behalf of the Rio Group and by the Indonesian delegation on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects represents a serious problem for our country that threatens public security, increases crime rates and causes the deaths of thousands of people and leaves others with permanent disabilities. This scourge annually claims a large number of lives and ties up significant resources that could be allocated to development. Therefore, advancing the establishment of effective controls should be a top priority of the international community.

In this context, Colombia attaches great importance to the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which is a fundamental instrument of a global nature and a point of reference for the adoption of measures undertaken to combat this phenomenon.

We believe that it is necessary to continue working at the multilateral level within that framework, progressing in the adoption of new commitments and in the implementation of those already made, with a view towards concluding legally binding instruments in this field. The broad participation of States in the carrying out of the Programme of Action is an essential requirement for achieving that end.

The successful outcome of the third Biennial Meeting of States to consider the Programme of Action, held last July in this city, and the final document it adopted are a positive contribution to those efforts. Colombia had the honour of hosting the regional meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean as part of the preparatory process for the third Biennial Meeting. Colombia also coordinated the adoption of the document presented by our region as a contribution to the process. In addition, Colombia provided facilitation work on international cooperation and assistance and national capacity-building as an independent and cross-cutting issue. We pledge to work together, starting now, in implementing the recommendations adopted at the Third Biennial Meeting. In that regard, we highlight the importance of establishing a follow-up mechanism for the Programme of Action.

We will actively participate at all levels in initiatives that contribute to coordinated and effective action against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. The fight against drug

trafficking, terrorism and transnational organized crime will be effective only if it is accompanied by decisive action to eliminate the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons.

As a sponsor, together with Japan and South Africa, of the draft resolution on small arms and light weapons, we request the support of all countries for its adoption at the conclusion of the present session. We commend Japan's efforts to submit a solid and comprehensive text that reflects the need to strengthen the Programme of Action.

Aware of the importance of having a legally binding instrument to regulate the arms trade and control the diversion of weapons to illicit trafficking, particularly in small arms and light weapons, Colombia participated in the Group of Governmental Experts established for that purpose. While my delegation is certainly satisfied with the work accomplished, we had hoped for greater flexibility on the part of some members of the Group, which would have enabled us to achieve better results.

As a country that has been the victim of that deadly trade, Colombia has been developing a significant institutional and technical control capacity. As a result, we have become one of the most advanced countries in terms of marking weapons and ammunition, export control and tracing. We are willing to share our experience and our achievements as part of our contribution to the process, which, we hope, will culminate in the adoption of an arms trade treaty.

Furthermore, as a State listed in Annex 2 of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, my country, which has always been mindful of its responsibility regarding that instrument's entry into force, deposited its instrument of ratification on 30 January 2008. Colombia reaffirms its political will and commitment concerning the Treaty, and we call on all Annex 2 States that have not yet done so to ratify it. Its entry into force is a necessity for peace and security.

Since 2002, when Colombia chaired the Group of Governmental Experts established by the General Assembly to assess the relationship between disarmament and development in the current context and the Organization's role in that area, my delegation has submitted the draft resolution entitled "Relationship between disarmament and development". We hope that it will have the support of all member States at the present session.

The Colombian delegation has also participated in a flexible and constructive manner in the work of the Conference on Disarmament. One of the issues to which we attach particular importance is the launching of the negotiations on banning fissile material for nuclear weapons. We should give that task the priority it deserves.

The present session of the General Assembly presents us with significant challenges. My delegation is confident that positive results will be achieved in the various areas under consideration. We hope that that will lead to substantive progress on the disarmament agenda. Colombia will participate actively in all those tasks and reaffirms its readiness to cooperate in achieving that goal.

Mr. Wolfe (Jamaica): The Jamaican delegation is indeed very delighted to see a member from our region, such as yourself, Mr. Chairperson, guiding the work of such an important Committee. Like all delegations that have spoken before us, we are confident in your leadership abilities and your commitment to guiding the work of the Committee to a successful conclusion. Please accept our best wishes and assurances of our full cooperation, particularly considering the cooperation that you gave me last year when I was in a position similar to yours. I also express congratulations to the other members of the Bureau on their election.

Jamaica associates itself with the statements made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, by the representative of Mexico on behalf of the Rio Group and by the representative of Haiti on behalf of the Caribbean Community.

Jamaica remains steadfast in its commitment to the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and is convinced that multilaterally agreed solutions must be at the centre of efforts to tackle political instability and the proliferation of weapons throughout the world, which threaten regional and international peace and security. Undoubtedly, that instability is often fuelled by extremism and intolerance, which are neither limited in scope nor confined to national borders.

We continue to emphasize that progress made on the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda is essential to lessen the threat of nuclear catastrophe and the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Central to achieving that objective is balanced consideration of

all threats to international peace and security, while ensuring that the actions taken do not run counter to the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter.

Jamaica supports the right of all States to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, as stipulated in article IV of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). At the same time however, concomitant with that right is a corresponding responsibility — dare I say obligation — to commit to the verification, monitoring and safeguard provisions of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). That is a mandatory responsibility, which we urge those States engaged in the development and use of nuclear energy to undertake with the utmost transparency and in full cooperation with the IAEA, thereby providing the guarantees necessary to build confidence and uphold the integrity of the Treaty.

It remains our fervent hope that serious efforts will be made by States parties to the NPT to ensure the success of the Review Conference scheduled for 2010 as we continue to promote the universality of the Treaty and full compliance by nuclear-weapon States with their obligations and commitments under the Treaty.

We are deeply concerned at recent events on the Korean peninsula that threaten to undermine the significant gains achieved over the past four years — and, in fact, during the most recent period — which will challenge the integrity of the NPT at its very core. We urge the players in the Six-Party Talks to reopen the channels for discussion and to work towards a long-term solution that will address the concerns of all parties and will provide the assurances necessary to allay the fears of the international community.

Jamaica continues to hold to the belief that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only guarantee that such weapons will never again be the unmitigated source of unspeakable death and wanton destruction on our planet. In that regard, nuclear-weapon-free zones are decisive in promoting the objective of nuclear disarmament. The long-standing Treaty of Tlatelolco, in Latin America and the Caribbean, provides a shining example. Nuclear-weapon-free zones act as a confidence-building measure while serving to develop trust and reduce tension. Jamaica naturally welcomes the creation of such zones in other parts of the world and calls for

urgent intergovernmental dialogue aimed at the creation of such zones where none currently exist. This is of particular urgency in the Middle East region, where the climate of unabated political tension and insecurity continues to require the urgent attention of the international community, given the serious threat posed to the preservation of regional and, by extension, international peace and security.

Jamaica welcomes the agreement reached last May at the Dublin Diplomatic Conference on Cluster Munitions on the text of the Convention and looks forward to its quick entry into force after its signing in December. Jamaica does not have cluster munitions. However, we have felt it important to give political support to this just cause and therefore participated in the negotiations that framed the text of the Convention. We are optimistic that it will inspire confidence in the disarmament agenda and serve as a catalyst in the work towards the elimination of weapons that have an indiscriminate and lethal impact on the lives of civilian populations.

The state of the disarmament machinery remains a source of concern to the majority of us. Despite the setbacks of recent years, Jamaica supports the work of the Disarmament Commission and calls for constructive, consensus-building dialogue to create a platform that can move the work of the Commission forward in the next cycle. Similarly, we endorse the efforts of the Open-Ended Working Group to consider the objectives and agenda, including the possible establishment of a preparatory committee, for the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and look forward to its reconvening at an appropriate time.

Our intense efforts to combat terrorism and transnational organized crime and to achieve the elimination of nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction should in no way marginalize the need for decisive action to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, which facilitate internal violence in many of our countries and result in high levels of homicide. Indeed, as my Prime Minister said in his statement in the general debate, for countries such as Jamaica, small arms and light weapons constitute weapons of mass destruction. The ease of access to illegal weapons and ammunitions and their connection to the narcotics trade place a tremendous burden on the Jamaican Government, which has to divert scarce

resources from the national development budget to arrest the debilitating effects of these problems.

We welcome the successful outcome earlier this year of the Third Biennial Meeting of States to Consider 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. We also note that, during the Conference, one of the overriding concerns of many States was their inability to effectively implement the Programme of Action owing to a lack of financial and technical capacity. It is our keen desire that developing countries should receive the requisite assistance in a timely manner so as to satisfactorily implement their commitments. Decisive action must be taken to prevent such weapons from falling into criminal hands. That is why we will continue to call for the establishment of a system for the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons and for ammunitions to be incorporated into the Programme of Action as a matter for serious consideration and action.

Jamaica looks forward to the report of the Group of Government Experts established under General Assembly resolution 61/89, entitled "Towards an arms trade treaty: establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms".

Mr. Hill (Australia): Mr. Chairman, Australia joins with others before us in congratulating you and the other members of the Bureau on your election; we wish you well.

The current Australian Government came to power late last year with a reinvigorated commitment to the United Nations, to multilateral diplomacy and to nuclear disarmament. We place great value on the work of the First Committee and the part it can play in promoting international security. Australia will exercise leadership and determination to inject greater energy, focus and an emphasis on substantive outcomes to the deliberations of both this Committee and other non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament forums. The Australian Foreign Minister, Mr. Stephen Smith, recently chaired the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Conference here in New York. As one of the six presidents of the Conference on Disarmament in 2009, Australia's Ambassador for Disarmament in Geneva will promote shared interests in getting the Conference on Disarmament back to

work. A key objective for Australia, as it is for most members of the Conference on Disarmament, is the commencement of negotiations, without preconditions, on a fissile material cut-off treaty. Australia looks forward to hosting the next meeting of the Missile Technology Control Regime in November.

Let us be frank: a fundamental challenge for the international community remains the deeply worrying lack of progress on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. It was with the clear aim of breaking the existing international stalemate that the Australian Prime Minister, Mr. Kevin Rudd, proposed in June this year the establishment of an international commission on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Japan has joined us in this endeavour and former Australian and Japanese Foreign Ministers, Gareth Evans and Yoriko Kawaguchi, have agreed to co-chair the commission, and other eminent and outstanding individuals from around the world have been added to the list of commissioners.

The commission initiative promises a fresh and imaginative vision. It aims to change the formulaic and unproductive nature of much of the current nuclear debate between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States, developed and developing countries, parties and non-parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Instead, it will take an inclusive approach and make practical and realistic recommendations on non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. With less than two years to go before the 2010 NPT Review Conference, there is a real urgency to move forward on these issues. It is hoped that the commission can help shape a global consensus on them in the lead up to 2010 and beyond.

The past year's encouraging steps on conventional disarmament show that it is indeed possible for the international community to make progress on difficult security issues, if a sufficient number of States are determined to do so. The Oslo process on cluster munitions is an outstanding example of this. The Cluster Munitions Convention concluded in Dublin in May will be a strong humanitarian instrument. The Convention will deliver protection and assistance to civilians and ban an entire class of weapons, as defined by the Convention. In so doing, it will also protect cooperation between nations in peacekeeping and enforcement operations. Australia, along with many other States, became convinced that

the time had come to act against cluster munitions, which cause unacceptable harm. We are proud to have played a strong role in the negotiation of this Convention. The Australian Government remains confident it will be in a position to sign the Convention this year. We encourage all States to join this important treaty.

Small arms and light weapons threaten good governance, development and law and order in many countries. We are delighted that this year has seen global action on small arms and light weapons get back on track with a reinvigorated commitment to the 2001 United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms at the Biennial Meeting of States in July. Australia was pleased to contribute to that outcome, including as Chair of the Geneva Process and of its Working Group on the Biennial Meeting. We will remain engaged with other States and regional organizations to implement the Programme, with an emphasis on cooperation with our Pacific Island neighbours. And we fully support the draft resolution on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons presented at this session by Colombia, South Africa and Japan.

Progress of this order, based on a clear vision, is needed across the arms control agenda. An arms trade treaty is greatly needed if we are to arrest the irresponsible and illicit transfer of conventional arms and components. A legally binding, multilateral treaty could bring much-needed transparency and accountability, codify existing best practice in the responsible transfer of conventional weapons, and prevent human rights abuse and the destabilizing accumulation of arms. We welcome the consensus report of the Group of Governmental Experts, including the recommendation to engage in further discussions. We are very pleased to be a co-author of the draft resolution seeking to establish an open-ended working group in 2009.

Australia remains committed to the goal of a comprehensive solution to the global landmines problem and will, as past President of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, join with the current President, Jordan, and the President-designate, Switzerland, in presenting the mine ban Convention resolution.

We can all be proud of our efforts since the mine ban Convention entered into force in 1999 has meant

that the number of new victims from landmines has consistently fallen and large tracts of land cleared, with over 40 million mines destroyed. But ongoing and integrated approaches to mine action are needed to improve the livelihood of landmine and explosive remnants of war survivors, their families and communities.

While Australia and many others are prepared to accept the responsibilities of the recently concluded Convention on Cluster Munitions, some major producers and users seem likely to remain outside it. We will therefore continue efforts in the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects to achieve meaningful prohibitions on the use of cluster munitions by those who have not engaged in the Oslo process.

Black market weapons-related activity, including through illicit brokering and intermediation services, is seriously destabilizing. Such trade illegally circumvents national, regional and international trade controls. The Republic of Korea and Australia will table a new draft resolution on the prevention of illicit brokering activities during this First Committee session to put that issue comprehensively on the United Nations agenda. Our consultations with States on the draft resolution have revealed a heartening degree of support for improved international cooperation to address that proliferation threat. The draft resolution affirms that brokering controls should not hamper legitimate trade and technology transfer, and calls on States to adopt national laws and measures to prevent illicit brokering and fully implement relevant treaties, instruments, resolutions and initiatives.

Australia is committed to preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. With respect to nuclear disarmament, many believe that the time has come. The opportunity for meaningful progress afforded by the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) must not be lost. We have been encouraged by the bipartisan and realistic case for nuclear disarmament set out by the United States statesmen Henry Kissinger, Sam Nunn, William Perry and George Shultz.

The international community rightly looks to the nuclear-weapon States to take the lead through lasting

reductions of their nuclear arsenals. We welcome the significant steps taken by some.

We will continue to look to States, both within and outside the NPT, that possess nuclear weapons to continue efforts towards the elimination of their nuclear arsenals and to do so transparently, and we encourage the nuclear-weapon States to reduce further the operational status of their nuclear weapons in ways that promote global security and stability. That said, the burden of responsibility for nuclear disarmament is not the nuclear-weapon States' alone. All States must contribute to ensuring an environment conducive to nuclear disarmament.

The nuclear non-proliferation regime continues to be put under pressure by the actions of a few States. We remain concerned about the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear activities, which continue to pose a significant threat to regional security and global non-proliferation objectives. We support the Six-Party process and urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to cooperate with it and implement agreed actions.

Australia is deeply concerned that Iran is persisting with its proliferation-sensitive activities in violation of four legally binding Security Council resolutions. Those are not the actions of a State seeking to address the international community's concerns about the nature of its nuclear programme. Iran needs to comply immediately with its obligations and suspend its uranium enrichment and reprocessing-related activities. It must grant the International Atomic Energy Agency the access it needs to remove the international community's justifiable doubts about Iran's peaceful intentions.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran cases are critical challenges to the non-proliferation regime. Their actions undermine international confidence, security and stability, which are fundamental not only to preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, but also to ensuring further progress on nuclear disarmament.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones can play an important role in preventing proliferation, consistent with NPT obligations. They also have an important role as a vehicle for nuclear-weapon States to provide binding negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States. Australia is party to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone in our own region.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for allowing me to go a moment over the time limit. I wish you well and offer you Australia's full support in your important work.

Ms. Jahan (Bangladesh): My delegation warmly congratulates you, Sir, and your Bureau upon your well-deserved election and we look forward to a successful session under your able stewardship.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. However, I would like to underscore the following points.

Bangladesh believes that the continued existence of weapons of mass destruction constitutes the greatest threat to humanity. We emphasize that, given the necessary political will, disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are achievable goals. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the most important instrument for non-proliferation. Universalization of the Treaty is therefore a sine qua non to making this world a safer place. While pessimism clouds the progress of the NPT, we are nonetheless hopeful that the third session of the Preparatory Committee and the 2010 NPT Review Conference will succeed in reaching the expected outcomes.

Similarly, for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), there has been little development in the past few years. As we mark the twelfth anniversary of the opening for signature of the CTBT, we call upon the nine remaining Annex 2 States to ratify it. Universalization of the Treaty must be pursued at the bilateral, regional and international levels.

Disarmament is a cornerstone of our foreign policy. We are bound by our constitution to general and complete disarmament. Bangladesh is party to all major international instruments pertaining to disarmament including the NPT; the CTBT; the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC); 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; the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction; and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of

Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction.

Bangladesh is the first Annex-2 nation in South Asia to have signed and ratified the CTBT. We have also concluded safeguards agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency, including the Additional Protocols. Those are tangible testimony to our unwavering commitment to the twin goals of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. We also actively support the development of the international monitoring system of the CTBT verification regime.

As one of the early signatories and ratifying States of the CWC, Bangladesh is committed to not pursuing the production, procurement, or use of chemical and biological weapons. Indeed, we have always condemned the use of such weapons of mass destruction against mankind and humanity. Bangladesh also supported the efforts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to make the Convention comprehensive, non-discriminatory, verifiable and ultimately a universal instrument for the elimination of chemical weapons from the world.

Bangladesh deplores the use of anti-personnel mines that maim, kill and terrorize unarmed and innocent civilians. We have destroyed all our stockpiles of landmines in fulfilment of our Treaty obligation. We are concerned that a large number of civilians, including women and children, still fall victim to anti-personnel landmines in conflict and post-conflict situations around the world. We urge the international community to provide financial, technical and humanitarian assistance to landmine clearance operations and to help rehabilitate the victims. We call upon the States that have not yet done so to become parties to the anti-personnel mine Convention. At the same time, we underscore that the non-State actors must also be pursued to stop their use of such weapons.

The Government of Bangladesh remains fully engaged in the goal of eliminating illicit small arms and light weapons, and fulfilling its obligations under the Programme of Action of 2001. A number of stringent statutory legislation and executive orders have been put in place to regulate lawful possession, manufacture, conversion, sale, export, import and transport of such weapons. These national laws and mechanisms also regulate the civilian ownership, record-keeping, collection, destruction and disposal of small arms under strict supervision of authorized

national law-enforcement authorities. Strict procedures are followed in the management of stockpiles, including storage, physical security, control of access, inventory management and accounting control. Confiscated illegal small arms and light weapons are routinely and publicly destroyed as provided for in our National Stockpile Management Programme. We call for enhanced international cooperation, particularly in the field of capacity-building.

Article 4 of the NPT guarantees the inalienable rights of all States to develop, research, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. These guarantees must apply without discrimination, and the rights of non-nuclear-weapon States to the peaceful use of nuclear energy and technology must be upheld and promoted.

Bangladesh strongly reaffirms its support for multilateralism in the negotiations relevant to disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. The international community must enhance its collective efforts to remove the long-drawn impasse in the Conference on Disarmament, which continues to be the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament.

We believe that a fissile material cut-off treaty is ripe for negotiation. It is our expectation that, in future sessions, the Conference will negotiate and reach an agreement on the complete elimination of such materials.

Bangladesh strongly believes in regional approaches to nuclear disarmament. Confidence-building measures through the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZ) can contribute significantly to this goal. We appreciate all the existing zones. We call for the establishment of similar zones in South Asia, in the Middle East and in other parts of the world. The nuclearization of South Asia is a particular concern for my country. We would urge India and Pakistan to relinquish their nuclear option and join the NPT regime. Israel must also do the same in the Middle East. Bilateral agreements on the civilian use of nuclear energy should not, in any way, hinder the cause of regional disarmament. We also call for universal access to the IAEA Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and Additional Protocols, as these have had, so far, a deterrent effect on nuclear proliferation.

We are also concerned at the continued development and deployment of anti-ballistic missile defence systems and the pursuit of advanced military

technologies capable of being deployed in outer space. Bangladesh reiterates its call for the resumption of work on the prevention of an arms race in outer space within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament.

We believe that trade in arms, just as in all other goods and services, should be brought under an agreed international regulatory framework. This would aim at the negotiation of a conventional arms trade treaty under the United Nations auspices. An effective arms trade treaty would ensure a responsible transfer of conventional weapons. This mechanism will also prevent the spread of such weaponry. As a country committed to disarmament and non-proliferation, Bangladesh would welcome the negotiation of such a treaty.

We are dismayed to learn that global military expenditures exceeded \$1.3 trillion in 2007, which is a real-terms increase of 6 per cent over 2006 and 45 per cent since 1998. The money that has been spent for military purposes corresponds to 2.5 per cent of world GDP. The frantic arms race is having an increasingly negative impact on our development agenda. We urge all countries, particularly the major military Powers, to divert part of those resources to poverty alleviation in developing countries. Such a move would greatly advance the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, by 2015. In this regard, we must also refocus on the link between disarmament and development. Similarly, it is time that we look into the impact of disarmament on ecology and the global climate regime, as the world today grapples with the new and emerging challenges of climate change.

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): That was the last speaker on the list for our general debate at this morning's session.

I would like to announce that the list of speakers for the general debate will close tomorrow, Tuesday, 7 October, at 6 p.m.

On another matter, I would like to echo the sentiments of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Duarte, and extend a warm welcome to the fellows of the 2008 United Nations Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament. I wish them success, and I hope that their experience in the Committee will be very helpful in their efforts.

Before calling on the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, who wishes to make a statement in exercise of the right of reply, I want to remind delegations that, in accordance with the rules of procedure, the first statement in exercise of the right of reply shall be limited to 10 minutes and the second to five minutes.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the Chairmanship. I will limit myself in this reply to responding to the statement made by our colleague, the representative of France, on behalf of the European Union (EU) this morning. We took note of what he referred to as the concern of the EU with regard to "the statement by the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on 25 April 2008 on allegations concerning an undeclared nuclear reactor in Syria."

I wish to draw the attention of the distinguished colleague that the Director General of the IAEA testified before the Board of Governors of the Agency on 28 September, that is five months after the date mentioned by the EU representative, five months, I repeat, during which many events have taken place and many facts have become clear. The Director General of the Agency stated that Syria cooperated with the Agency and enabled its inspectors to visit not only the site, but also the area surrounding the site.

My colleague's statement unfortunately lacked any reference to the importance of creating a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. It is well known to all that my country in particular proposed an initiative to the Security Council, when it was a member of the Council, at the end of 2003 to adopt a resolution creating a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. That initiative was opposed then by a major influential Power in the Security Council.

The omission in the statement made by the representative of France on behalf of the European Union (EU) shows a serious lacuna in EU policy regarding the issue of nuclear non-proliferation. In the Middle East in particular, such an omission implies a blatant disregard of the dangerous Israeli nuclear activities that threaten our peoples and our region and thus reveals a European double standard and warped logic with regard to the nuclear issue. Since the representative of France was defending international law, we had hoped that he would condemn Israel's attack of the Syrian site instead of falling into the trap of misleading international public opinion. I wish to remind him that, historically, France is more responsible than any other State for the Israeli nuclear dossier. Unfortunately, it was France that provided Israel with the Dimona nuclear reactor in the late 1950s, when nuclear weapons were in the possession of only a few countries in the world.

Israel possesses 200 nuclear warheads and has eight nuclear reactors in an area no larger than 20,000 square kilometres. One can only imagine the scope of the risks posed by the presence of eight nuclear reactors on a piece of land no larger than Manhattan. Everyone knows that Israel has not acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (IAEA) and that it has consistently refused to subject its nuclear facilities to IAEA monitoring. Therefore, I would say that anyone who refers to United States accusations that have been proved false is helping to cover up the aggressive Israeli policy against the sovereignty of my country and spreading unfounded claims, as stated by the IAEA experts who visited the Syrian site and concluded that there was no proof that any nuclear activities had been carried out there.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.