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First Committee

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Official Records

Chairperson: Mr. Marco Antonio Suazo (Honduras)

In the absence of the Chairperson, Mr. Zvachula (Federated States of Micronesia), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

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

Agenda items 81 to 96 (continued)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Acting Chairperson: Before proceeding I would like to remind delegations to limit their statements to 10 minutes for those countries speaking in their national capacities and 15 minutes for those speaking on behalf of several delegations.

Mr. Al-Hayen (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, Sir, it is my pleasure on behalf of the State of Kuwait to congratulate Mr. Suazo sincerely on his election as Chairman of the First Committee. We are certain that his wisdom and experience will contribute to the Committee's success in reaching the goals to which we all aspire. We would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau. My country's delegation wishes to emphasize that it will pursue its full cooperation with them and all participating delegations to achieve our goals.

I am also pleased to express support for the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the States members of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Creating a world totally free of all nuclear weapons is indeed a noble objective that must be achieved. The international community continues to face increasing challenges that threaten international peace and security and the credibility of existing international treaties and conventions. This legacy must be reactivated and supported.

However, we continue to witness tangible regression with respect to achieving the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation system. The failure of some States parties to the Treaty to follow up on their commitments and their selective determination of the scope of their obligations constitute serious blows to the credibility of the NPT, undermine our efforts and endeavours, and call into question the aims and universality of the Treaty. They create a gap in mutual trust between States that threatens the balance of security as well as regional and international stability.

The State of Kuwait firmly believes that the possession of nuclear weapons guarantees security for no country. On the contrary, the proliferation of these deadly weapons will increase tension and conflict between peoples. Therefore, the State of Kuwait views the current international situation with grave concern, particularly since the Middle East continues to face security threats and dangers from the proliferation and use of weapons of mass destruction.

Thirteen years after the adoption at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference of a resolution

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calling for the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons as well as other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, the region remains a blatant example of the ineffectiveness of the Treaty in achieving security for its parties. We therefore hope that all States parties to the NPT will comply with the obligations stipulated therein and in the Safeguards Agreements, and will work closely with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to resolve any doubts or questions that may arise about their programmes through negotiation and constructive dialogue.

We emphasize the importance of continued dialogue between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the IAEA as an important step towards dispelling the fears and doubts surrounding the Iranian nuclear programme.

In that context, we demand that Israel, the only country in the region that has not joined the NPT and that possesses nuclear weapons, in flagrant defiance of the resolutions of international legitimacy, accede immediately to the Treaty, dispose of its nuclear arsenals and subject its nuclear facilities to the safeguards system of the IAEA. Israel's situation in the region constitutes a clear disruption of the balance of power and a constant concern for the region. The State of Kuwait calls on the international community to work to halt the sale of all scientific and technological means that contribute to strengthening Israel's nuclear weapons arsenal or those of any other State that seeks to develop its own weapons of mass destruction programmes.

The State of Kuwait believes in the pivotal role of the United Nations in confronting major challenges, foremost among which is banning the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The way to address this and other relevant issues has been clearly defined in numerous agreements, conventions, resolutions and work programmes.

What is now required from Member States is to honour their commitments and to cooperate and coordinate among themselves in implementing those commitments. The core of the issue here is a lack of political will. Therefore, endeavours, efforts and the adoption of measures must continue to ensure that high-level political decisions are taken to implement internationally agreed measures. Such measures are required as a matter of general priority to enhance our deliberations on the following goals.

We must ensure the total and non-selective implementation of the provisions of the NPT, in particular article VI concerning disarmament and article IV concerning the facilitation of peaceful uses of nuclear technology; total adherence to the principles set forth in the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly, the Outcome Document of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, and the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, especially with respect to the 13 practical steps; and more effective measures to ensure that States that have not yet acceded to the NPT will do so immediately in order to enforce the effectiveness and universality of the Treaty.

We must reiterate the inalienable right of States to obtain the development assistance, technology and know-how needed to use nuclear power for peaceful purposes, as allowed by the relevant international treaties. We must work closely with the IAEA to dispel any uncertainty surrounding nuclear programmes through negotiations and constructive dialogue.

We must reiterate the importance of facilitating the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and call upon Member States that have not ratified it to do so. In this context, we welcome the signing of the Treaty by the brotherly Republic of Iraq and hope that it will ratify it promptly.

We must support efforts towards the establishment of a legally binding international instrument on the illegality of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons to resolve conflicts, as well as grant non-nuclear States guarantees against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. We must support and seek to implement the 1995 resolution on making the Middle East a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. We must pursue transparency and avoid double standards.

The State of Kuwait firmly believes that terrorism is a scourge that must be uprooted, confronted and crushed by all means available through international coordination and cooperation. The State of Kuwait has submitted its national report to the Secretariat in compliance with the provisions of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which aims to prevent weapons of mass destruction and the materials needed for their manufacture from reaching terrorist groups.

As to the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons, the State of Kuwait welcomes the adoption

by the General Assembly of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. Despite the fact that the United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects did not achieve the desired result, it was able to shed light on an important issue.

In conclusion, we hope that the Committee's deliberations will be characterized by transparency and comprehensiveness and seek to reaching consensus on the realization of the aspiration of Member States to achieve international peace and security.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, Sir, allow me, on behalf of the Algerian delegation, to congratulate Mr. Suazo and all the other members of the Bureau on their election. I assure them of my delegation's full cooperation as we strive to ensure the success of our work. I would be remiss if I did not also commend the presence among us of Ambassador Sergio Duarte, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

My delegation fully endorses the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and of Nigeria on behalf of the African Group.

This session of the General Assembly marks the thirtieth anniversary of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which constituted a historical turning point in multilateral action for disarmament, and whose Outcome Document served as a guideline for the efforts of the United Nations in this area.

With the end of the cold war and ideological confrontation, this surge in new awareness by the international community promoted a climate of détente and cooperation that promised better prospects for dialogue and joint action in the area of disarmament. At that time, we witnessed a qualitative change in mindset that led to greater flexibility in positions and unleashed initiatives that had long been held hostage to the narrow game of power-brokering.

Today, we realize that the hopes raised by those efforts to free humankind from the spectre of weapons of mass destruction gave way to disenchantment and

even frustration, and the risks related to the development of a new generation of weapons and the emergence of threats related to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction have never been as pressing and alarming to the whole international community as they are now.

The stagnation in the multilateral enterprise aimed at general and complete disarmament is a source of deep concern for us. Short of a collective commitment to realizing the objectives under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the decisions taken at the NPT Review Conferences of 1995 and 2000, there is a danger that the hopes of the past three decades for laying the foundations of the system of collective security to which we all aspire will be seriously compromised.

In this regard, the holding of the upcoming NPT Review Conference in 2010 and the third session of its Preparatory Commission in May next year offer us a genuine opportunity to rehabilitate the multilateral cooperation and negotiation framework in the area of nuclear disarmament, which continues to be the top priority, and to provide comprehensive and lasting solutions to the issues of disarmament and non-proliferation, which are closely linked processes.

The strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime is necessary and goes hand in hand with meaningful progress in nuclear disarmament. Any attempt to maintain imbalances between the two would awaken suspicions that arise from unilateral approaches. Initiatives to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime cannot by themselves offer a collective response to the global threat posed by the ongoing presence of nuclear weapons. The prevention of proliferation, as well as initiatives aimed at strengthening non-proliferation measures, should not be used as pretexts to impede the access of States parties to the NPT to the peaceful use of nuclear energy for development purposes.

Algeria remains convinced that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only true guarantee of security for nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States alike. Meanwhile, non-nuclear-weapon States are entitled to unconditionally benefit from safeguards prohibiting the use or threat of use in any circumstance of nuclear weapons against them by the nuclear-weapon States. To ensure that they are deterrent and credible,

security safeguards urgently need to be codified in a legally binding instrument.

It is in this spirit, too, that we see the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones as effective contributions to strengthening the non-proliferation regime and to efforts to give real substance to the work of nuclear disarmament. They are important instruments that contribute to the primary goal of building peace and security at the regional and international levels.

Algeria, which actively contributed to the drafting and adoption of the 1998 African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, continues to be deeply concerned by the lack of progress in the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. It urges the international community to send a strong message to Israel to comply with international legality and to remove the principal, indeed unique obstacle to that important goal, thereby contributing to strengthening peace and stability in that sensitive region of the world.

Algeria is firmly committed to meeting all of its obligations under the regional and international instruments to which it is party. It will spare no effort, in the context of the regional and multinational bodies to which it is a party, to support and promote initiatives aimed at relaunching the process of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

In that regard, my delegation shares the concerns of many delegations, and those of Africa in particular, with respect to the dangers posed by the proliferation and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, whose destabilizing effects seriously threaten international peace and stability. We also reiterate our commitment to the prompt 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, which laid the foundation for international cooperation and charted the path to common and solidary action to eradicate this scourge, which is a principal source of supplies for terrorism and conflict zones, particularly in Africa. It is in that spirit, too, that Algeria has joined the efforts of the international community to establish a multilateral framework, under United Nations auspices, to regulate international transfers of conventional weapons.

Furthermore, pursuant to its international obligations under the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of

Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, in November 2005 Algeria completed the process of destroying its stockpiles of anti-personnel mines, six months prior to the expiration of the time period allowed under the Convention.

At the regional level, Algeria has made unflinching dedication and commitment to the promotion of international peace and security a permanent aspect of its foreign policy and a primary principle guiding its international actions. We continue to be motivated by our eagerness to contribute to initiatives aimed at facilitating dialogue and consultation and at strengthening security within the traditional frameworks of participation and solidarity in the Mediterranean region or in Africa. Thus, every year my delegation is honoured and pleased to submit to the First Committee a draft resolution on strengthening security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my wishes for every success in the work of the Committee.

Mr. Hoang Chi Trung (Viet Nam): At the outset, on behalf of the Vietnamese delegation, I wish to congratulate Mr. Suazo on his election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. We are sure that, with his diplomatic skills, the Committee's deliberations will arrive at a fruitful outcome. My delegation also extends its warmest congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

Viet Nam fully associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the statement made by the representative of Myanmar on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), respectively.

The process of complete disarmament and arms control is facing major challenges and difficulties. The disarmament efforts of the United Nations have obviously made little progress in recent years. In fact, we have encountered several setbacks. For instance, the 2008 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission failed to reach any agreement on the issues of nuclear disarmament and confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. The Conference on Disarmament has not managed to conclude its programme of work.

These problems present serious challenges and difficulties for the work of our Committee. It is

therefore imperative that all member States exert political will and greater flexibility to break the current impasse and reach agreement on the important issues of common concern so as to further the cause of disarmament.

In this connection, I wish to reaffirm my country's consistent and strong support for the objectives of general and complete disarmament, with priority given to nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. We further underscore the need to carry out, in parallel, nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear proliferation, since they complement each other.

Over the years, Viet Nam has demonstrated its strong commitment cause of disarmament at the United Nations. My delegation further stresses the imperative requirement that the world rid itself of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. We are fully convinced that the only absolute guarantee against nuclear disasters is the complete elimination of these weapons.

We further reiterate our firm support for the initiative to find ways to eliminate nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction and to build a world free of all these weapons. We wish to underline the significance of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 8 July 1996 that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. Along these lines, my delegation strongly supports the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament to identify effective ways and means to achieve general and complete disarmament.

Viet Nam attaches special importance to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The NPT constitutes the cornerstone of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, which prevents the spread of nuclear weapons technology and ensures the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. We wish to underline the equal importance of the implementation of the three pillars of the NPT: nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. We hold that all States parties, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, have primary obligations to strictly implement the package agreed at the 1995 and 2000 NPT Review Conferences,

especially to undertake the 13 practical steps towards complete nuclear disarmament, in conformity with article IV of the Treaty.

Pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, my delegation joins the international community in urging the nuclear-weapon States to take further concrete steps to reduce and destroy their nuclear arsenals and to bear the primary responsibility with regard to security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States. We are fully convinced that 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 top priority. We urge all States parties to the Treaty to work harder together to make the 2010 NPT Review Conference a success and to adopt innovative and effective measures to further strengthen the non-proliferation regime.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a crucial instrument in promoting nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. It is regrettable that the Treaty has not yet entered into force in spite of the fact that more than a decade has elapsed since it was signed. Given the vital importance of the Treaty's mandate, we support efforts to bring the Treaty into force as soon as possible. We also believe that, pending the entry into force of the CTBT, all States should maintain political moratoriums on nuclear-weapon-test explosions or any other nuclear explosions, and on all acts that would undermine the objectives and purposes of the Treaty.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world is a positive step for certain nuclear non-proliferation regimes in the respective regions. We support the goal of the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, as adopted at the 1995 Review Conference of the States parties to the NPT. In our region, Viet Nam joins the efforts of the ASEAN member States to ensure that South-East Asia is free from nuclear weapons. We urge the nuclear-weapon States to be more forthcoming in the negotiations to accede to the Protocol of the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in order to realize that important objective.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons has an adverse impact on international security, stability and development, and therefore we fully

support and are committed to implementing the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. In this connection, we greatly appreciate the outcome reached at the Third Biennial Meeting of States held in July 2008 in New York, which highlighted various measures to effectively implement the Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons. We share the view that international assistance and cooperation play a crucial role in assuring the effective implementation of the Programme of Action and wish to encourage further regional and international cooperation in this field.

On a final note, next year Viet Nam will be one of the Presidents of the Conference on Disarmament, the single multilateral forum for disarmament negotiations. We will confer with other delegations to find solutions to overcome the current deadlock and to reach a comprehensive and balanced programme of work. We look forward to working with other member States to make the work of the Conference on Disarmament next year a more rewarding and fruitful endeavour.

Mr. Malmierca Diaz (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba congratulates Mr. Suazo and wishes him great success as Chairman of the First Committee. We also extend our congratulations to the other officers of the Bureau. We would also like to recognize the fine work undertaken by Ambassador Duarte at the Office for Disarmament Affairs. We fully support the statement made on Monday by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

While we are making statements and pledging our commitment to peace and disarmament, the reality outside this room is quite different. It is unjustifiable that, far from decreasing, military expenditures have been increasing every year at an accelerated rate. Such expenditures have already reached a record \$1.3 trillion, 45 per cent more than 10 years ago. That is a consequence mainly of the dramatic growth of the United States military budget.

That country alone spends as much on weaponry as the rest of the world, and 41 United States companies produce 63 per cent of all the weapons sold in the world. At the same time, 34 Western European countries sell 29 per cent of the weapons sold in the world. In other words, the latest statistics show that the United States and the countries of the European Union control 92 per cent of the world's armament market.

Instead of promoting nuclear disarmament, which is and must continue to be the top priority in the area of disarmament, arms build-ups and wasteful spending on new weapons and armament systems are promoted. While resources are so squandered, it is clear that not even the modest Millennium Development Goals will be met by 2015. They will not be met because more than 100 countries of the South do not have and will not have the \$150 billion necessary to achieve them. The Millennium Development Goals could be achieved with just 10 per cent of current military expenditure. With the resources that are devoted to armaments today, the 852 million hungry people of the world could be fed for a year, proper houses could be guaranteed to more than 640 million children who now have nowhere to live, and 115 million children who are unable to attend primary school could do so. Cuba therefore reiterates once again its proposal to devote at least half of current military expenditures to meet the needs of economic and social development through a United Nations-managed fund.

Notwithstanding the proclaimed end of the cold war, there are still some 25,000 nuclear weapons in the world, 10,200 of which are ready for immediate use. Nuclear-weapons modernization programmes have not stopped. The mere existence of nuclear weapons and the doctrines that sanction their possession and use pose a grave threat to international peace and security. Two sessions of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) have already been held. It is important that concrete results be obtained at the Conference and that the current disturbing lack of progress in the implementation of the 13 practical measures agreed in the year 2000 be reversed. Cuba rejects the selective application of the NPT. Issues relative to nuclear disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy cannot continue to be disregarded while horizontal non-proliferation is favoured. The inalienable right of States to the peaceful use of nuclear energy must be fully respected.

Cuba regrets the impasse in which the Conference on Disarmament finds itself. Our country was ready to support a possible consensus on the so-called proposal 1840. Although the adoption of the proposal would have meant at least the possibility of finally having something resembling a programme of work in the Conference on Disarmament, we consider

that it did not have the necessary support because it did not reflect the will of all members of the Conference. Cuba will continue to give the highest priority to nuclear disarmament, and future consensus in the framework of the Conference on Disarmament should be built on that basis. It would be unacceptable to give in to the sad *realpolitik* imposed by the current unfortunate conjuncture in disarmament and arms control. The stubbornness and power of a few cannot compel all of us to take the easiest path of accommodating their every interest while real priorities are set aside.

Cuba reaffirms its unflinching commitment to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and supports every action aimed at its attaining its universality. The report of the Second Review Conference of the Convention, held in April, reflects in a reasonably balanced way the positions and concerns of the States parties. That is why it is an important tool for the future.

The complete destruction of chemical arsenals is and will continue to be the most important task of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). As we approach the deadlines, it will be important to pay careful attention to the design of the future role of the OPCW in the international arena. Cuba feels that the OPCW has a very important role to play in favour of the economic and technological progress of the States parties, particularly the least developed among them.

The follow-up mechanism implemented at the Sixth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction is beyond a shadow of a doubt a useful tool for the exchange of national experiences and a forum for cooperation. However, Cuba believes that the only way to truly reinforce and perfect the Convention is through the negotiation and adoption of a legally binding protocol resolving the remaining gaps in this instrument.

The Group of Governmental Experts established under General Assembly resolution 61/89 held its working session this year. The Group of Governmental Experts could not agree on whether or not a legally binding instrument establishing common international

parameters for the export, import and transfer of conventional arms is feasible. Moreover, the Group emphasized in its final report that, given its complexity, the topic calls for a balanced, open, transparent and step-by-step consideration within the United Nations on the basis of consensus. In other words, it is clear that the question of conventional arms transfer neither has an easy answer nor allows for preconceived or simplistic recipes.

Following the recommendation of the First Committee, last year the General Assembly, for the first time in its history, adopted a resolution on the effects of the use of arms and ammunition containing depleted uranium. Many of the opinions sent by Member States and the relevant international organizations responding to the resolution confirm the importance of the topic and the need to address the legitimate concerns of the international community with respect to the use of these arms and ammunition. We are certain that, on this occasion, the draft resolution on this topic will be supported by the vast majority of delegations.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I offer our most sincere congratulations to Mr. Suazo on the trust that has been conferred upon him as Chairman of the First Committee. I should also like to offer my congratulations to the members of the Bureau and to thank Under-Secretary-General Sergio Duarte, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for his comprehensive statement and constructive role in supporting our work. We also support the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

International concern is increasing regarding the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. Concern at their stockpiling in frightening quantities has increased along with the development of new lethal weapons by many States. International efforts to regulate the proliferation of nuclear weapons with total transparency are being undertaken.

Meanwhile, some nuclear States, sadly, are handling the nuclear dossier in a twisted manner by giving priority to their own interests over those of international peace and security. In recent days, some representatives of those States have clearly stated that their countries' commitment to nuclear

non-proliferation is tied to what they refer to as their national security and the security of their allies.

Perhaps they forget that the maintenance of national security is a right of all States, guaranteed by the United Nations Charter, and not merely the prerogative of a few. They forget that this principle cannot be wielded as a pretext for skirting non-proliferation mechanisms while using double standards that have become, as we all know, an obstacle to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Some, though not all, treat the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in the same manner and have, for decades, provided Israel with reactors, heavy water, scientists and cutting-edge technology allowing for the production of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems. This threatens the peace and security of the Middle East region as a whole. Those States protect Israel, treat it in a selective manner and give priority to its interests despite its ongoing aggression against its neighbours and its occupation of the territories of others. The danger that Israel will use these weapons also undermines the claims of those States that they are keen to achieve universal nuclear non-proliferation.

The reasons given by those States are selective and circumstantial and have nothing to do with international peace and security. They are aimed at settling bilateral scores outside the framework of international law with some States whose positions are not in step with the policies of those influential States. If we simply look at what is happening on the ground we will realize that the countries that exempt Israel's nuclear weapons from the NPT were themselves directly responsible for the introduction of nuclear weapons to that region when, in the 1950s, they provided Israel with the nuclear technology and protected its nuclear military installations.

International efforts have combined to create nuclear-weapon-free zones in Africa, Asia, Central Europe, the Caribbean and Latin America. Unfortunately, the Middle East remains without any serious international initiative to make it a nuclear-weapon-free zone that would ensure international peace and security. Syria agrees with the majority of States that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East would be in step with United Nations resolutions. Israel, as the only State of the region that possesses nuclear installations and a

nuclear arsenal, must join the NPT and place its nuclear installations under the comprehensive safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). I repeat: Israel is the only party in the region to have nuclear installations, which undermines nuclear non-proliferation efforts. All its nuclear systems should be placed under comprehensive IAEA safeguards.

There is also the need to respect Security Council resolution 487 (1981), in which Israel is urged to place immediately all its nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguards. We also believe that the United Nations and the IAEA are the natural forums for serious negotiations on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

Syria, on behalf of the Arab Group, presented, on 29 December 2003, a draft resolution in the Security Council for the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, in the Middle East. Unfortunately, this initiative has not been adopted and remains opposed by a large nuclear-weapon State whose general position on weapons of mass destruction is characterized by double standards. The Security Council has not assumed its responsibilities in that area. That being the case, Israel continues to defy the international community by pursuing its military nuclear programme and refusing to become a party to the NPT and to place its nuclear installations and activities under IAEA safeguards.

It is regrettable that the General Conference of the IAEA, at its latest session just a few days ago, was unable to adopt a draft resolution concerning the nuclear capacity of Israel and the dangers that it poses. It is unfortunate that the draft resolution was not adopted, thereby sending a negative message to the non-nuclear-weapon States. Despite numerous resolutions adopted over the course of decades regarding Israel's nuclear-weapons capacity, its military nuclear arsenal continues to be modernized and receives technical and financial assistance from some large States that maintain an embargo on the peaceful use of nuclear energy by other States. Here we must warn against the international silence over Israel's position on nuclear weapons, which has shifted from a policy of nuclear ambiguity to a declaration of possession of and threat to use such weapons. These changes also reflect the duplicity of the State protecting Israel from the consequences of Israel's non-respect of its international commitments.

Encouraging an arms race, which has dangerous implications for international peace and security, undermines the conviction of the people of the region of the importance of the idea of nuclear non-proliferation.

If certain international parties do not wish to implement the resolutions and conclusions of the NPT Review Conferences, they will continue to undermine the credibility of those resolutions and conclusions. The resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 Conference to extend the NPT for an indefinite period of time would not have been adopted unanimously had it not been for the resolution to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

We believe that the right of States to obtain nuclear technology for peaceful uses is inalienable, in keeping with article IV of the NPT, and cannot be reinterpreted. We call for the implementation of the relevant instruments on nuclear weapons and the threat of the use of nuclear weapons. The elimination of these weapons is the best guarantee of their non-use or non-threat of use. We believe that the nuclear-weapon States should provide guarantees for non-nuclear States through a legally binding international instrument. That is the best assurance. The NPT Review Conference is the best forum for negotiations and we hope that the four areas — the nuclear sector, negative assurances, safeguards against the use of nuclear weapons in outer space and the instrument on fissile material — will all be addressed in the agenda.

The Acting Chairperson: I should like to take this opportunity to remind delegations to limit their statements to 10 minutes for those speaking in their national capacities and to 15 minutes for those speaking on behalf of several delegations.

Mr. Ngah (Malaysia): On behalf of the delegation of Malaysia, I wish to extend our warmest congratulations to the Chairman on his election to the chairmanship of the First Committee at the sixty-third session of the General Assembly. We are confident that, with his experience, knowledge and leadership, he will be able to steer this Committee towards a fruitful conclusion. We assure him of our full support.

My delegation associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and of Myanmar

on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Malaysia has always maintained a principled position on general and complete disarmament of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, and that measures to achieve this goal should be taken through the multilateral process. In this regard, Malaysia's view is that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) sets the standard for the proliferation of weapons that threaten international security. We look forward to working with all concerned parties, particularly at the meeting of the NPT States Parties in May 2009, so as to achieve agreement on all issues of concern towards attaining nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The NPT forms one of the cornerstones of international peace and security, and if it is to serve this purpose meaningfully it must become a universal instrument. The present situation, in which India, Israel and Pakistan in particular remain outside the NPT, somewhat weakens the NPT regime. We therefore call on these countries to join the NPT as non-nuclear-weapon States in order for the Treaty to become a truly universal disarmament regime.

Malaysia is also concerned by recent developments involving bilateral deals in civil nuclear cooperation with States that do not have a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). This development undermines the foundations of the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Such bilateral cooperation is a manifestation of the double standards and discrimination that contravene commitments and obligations under the NPT. Such selective approaches may lead many non-nuclear-weapon States to question the relevance of the NPT itself. Having forsworn nuclear weapons, developing non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty deserve to be accorded preferential treatment over non-States parties to access nuclear equipment, material and technology, be it through the technical cooperation with the IAEA or through bilateral arrangements.

Malaysia firmly believes that non-proliferation activities will not succeed if they are not accompanied by efforts to realize the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, Malaysia wishes to stress that efforts

for the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States should be pursued as a matter of priority. In this connection Malaysia believes that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones will enhance global and regional peace, strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime and contribute towards realizing the objectives of nuclear disarmament.

It is essential that nuclear-weapon States provide unconditional assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons to States belonging to nuclear-weapon-free zones. We continue to urge nuclear-weapon States to become parties to the Protocol of the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty. Malaysia also fully supports the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction.

Malaysia submitted its instrument of ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) on 17 January 2008. Malaysia calls upon all States — particularly the Annex 2 States, whose signature and ratification of the CTBT are necessary for the Treaty's entry into force — to work towards the entry into force of the CTBT. As reaffirmed at the fourth CTBT ministerial meeting on 24 September 2008 in New York, the CTBT would contribute towards the prevention of the vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons by halting the development of new weapons of mass destruction.

Another measure that Malaysia feels would give impetus towards the goal of building a safer world free of nuclear weapons is to reduce the operational status of nuclear weapons systems. In this regard, Malaysia together with Chile, Nigeria, New Zealand, Switzerland and Sweden, will submit a draft resolution on this issue.

As a further commitment towards nuclear non-proliferation, Malaysia will again submit a draft resolution on the follow-up to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons. Malaysia is submitting this draft resolution to remind us of our obligation to pursue in good faith and to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. Malaysia calls on all States to fulfil this obligation by commencing multilateral

negotiations leading to an early conclusion of a nuclear-weapons convention at the earliest possible date.

The need to address through the multilateral framework the threat posed by other weapons of mass destruction is as important as the need to address that posed by nuclear weapons. Malaysia strongly supports the universal implementation of and adherence to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC) and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC). In this regard, Malaysia continues to strengthen its existing domestic laws and to enact new legislation to deal with developments in the area surrounding the BWC. The new legislation will strengthen national security and oversight measures on the implementation of the BWC, which would match Malaysia's undertakings in implementing the CWC. Malaysia's Chemical Weapons Convention Act entered into force on 1 September 2006.

Malaysia has put in place adequate and stringent laws, administrative procedures and regulations for the effective control of the production of small arms and light weapons as well as of the export, import, transit and retransfer of such weapons in order to prevent their illegal manufacture and illicit trafficking or their illegal diversion to unauthorized use.

Malaysia strongly supports international and humanitarian efforts to ban anti-personnel mines. For its part, Malaysia completed the destruction of its stockpile of anti-personnel mines on 23 January 2001, making it the first anti-personnel-mine-free country in Asia. Malaysia calls on other countries, particularly those in the South-East Asian region, to follow suit and become parties to the Ottawa Convention.

Malaysia also aligns itself with the objective of achieving the total elimination of cluster munitions, which also cause excessive injury or have indiscriminate effects, especially on civilians, and which cause massive destruction of property.

I conclude by reaffirming Malaysia's commitment to general and complete disarmament. My delegation remains ready to work with the Chairman and other member States towards achieving a positive

and successful outcome of this session of the First Committee.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, on behalf of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, to congratulate the Chairman on his election to preside over the work of this important Committee.

We are facing an international situation of increasing political, economic and social instability that has resulted from an exhausted, unjust, exploitative and predatory economic and political model that has prevailed on a global scale and unleashed numerous international crises that are having a negative effect on the attainment of the goals of peace, stability, prosperity and social justice. This situation of widespread uncertainty is compounded by the paralysis that has affected multilateral disarmament diplomacy for several years and is the result of a lack of agreement on matters on its agenda that are of crucial importance to the international community.

The stagnation of the institutional mechanisms of disarmament can be attributed to the position maintained by certain imperial countries that seek to impose their hegemonic stances by way of unilateral actions that contradict the spirit of dialogue and cooperation that should guide relations between sovereign States. In that regard, Venezuela is convinced that international efforts to promote horizontal and vertical nuclear non-proliferation should be undertaken in tandem with efforts to attain the objectives of nuclear disarmament.

The existence of 10,000 nuclear warheads that are ready for immediate use and more than 20,000 nuclear warheads in reserve is a Kafkaesque threat to humanity. It is alarming and frightful merely to consider what would befall the human species should those weapons be used. We cannot lose sight of the fact that the elimination of these weapons is the safest road to preventing their acquisition by terrorist groups. Our country is firmly convinced that the nuclear-weapon States bear the greatest responsibility for the application of measures to reduce and eliminate their nuclear arsenals.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela believes that the priorities agreed on in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament remain fully relevant — all the more so if we bear in mind that the modernization of

nuclear weapons has continued at an accelerated and perverse rate. We believe it essential that the Conference on Disarmament, with the full support of its members, fully live up to its responsibilities as the sole negotiating forum for agreements in this area.

The granting of negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States is another measure to which my country assigns particular importance. The latent threat and risk of the use of nuclear weapons against countries that do not possess them continues to be genuine. Some nuclear countries have not stopped trying to blackmail us by threatening to use nuclear weapons. It is therefore necessary to pursue negotiations on a binding international instrument by which the nuclear-weapon States would pledge not to use or threaten the use of such systems against States that do not have such weapons. The negotiation of a convention prohibiting the production of fissile material for the development of nuclear weapons is another matter of the utmost importance, given the danger that such systems represent.

The Chairperson took the Chair.

My country wishes to make particular mention of the need to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States. We refer specifically to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, to which we are a Party, the Treaties of Rarotonga and Pelinda, the status of Mongolia as a nuclear-weapon-free State and, more recently, the decision to sign the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia in Semipalatinsk in 2006.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reaffirms its support for the proposal to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, pursuant to the pertinent Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. It is essential that Israel, the only country of that region that has not adhered to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and has not declared an intention to do so, should get rid of its nuclear weapons, adhere to the NPT and subject itself to the full-scope safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Venezuela reaffirms the inalienable right of States to develop, produce and research the use of nuclear energy for peaceful uses without discrimination, in particular with respect to developing countries that must diversify their sources of energy to attain full technological independence.

Venezuela wishes to express its concern with regard to the possible deployment of weapons systems in outer space, which could lead to an arms race with unpredictable consequences. Along these lines, we call for the strengthening of the existing international legal framework so as, on the one hand, to eliminate the risks of the militarization of outer space and, on the other hand, to reaffirm the peaceful nature of research and development in outer space for the benefit of humankind.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reaffirms its support for the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, a high-priority political instrument for channelling international cooperation efforts to put an end to this illicit activity.

Finally, our delegation wishes to reaffirm its full commitment to the promotion of a safer and more peaceful world and emphatically reiterates its respect for the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. We do so by promoting and strengthening cooperative multilateralism that offers full assurances to all countries that they will not be the object of the use or threat of use of mass destruction. Such efforts are cornerstones of our quest for peace and international security.

Mr. Jeenbaev (Kyrgyzstan) (*spoke in Russian*): Let me congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to your responsible post and wish you every success in your honourable and noble mission. I assure you of the full support and constructive cooperation of the Kyrgyz delegation in our joint efforts. We also thank the United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Under-Secretary-General Sergio Duarte, for his contributions and efforts in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Commitment to disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is a core principle of the foreign policy of the Kyrgyz Republic. One fundamental approach in this area continues to be strengthening the international nuclear non-proliferation regime and its basis, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Kyrgyzstan also views the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as a key instrument in the area of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and in ensuring strategic stability and security.

In February 2004, the Kyrgyz Republic took a decisive step towards preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and materials that could be used to develop weapons of mass destruction, and ensuring the safe application and use of nuclear materials by signing an NPT Safeguards Agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In 2006, Kyrgyzstan acceded to the Additional Protocol on IAEA safeguards.

Kyrgyzstan believes that the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction is an effective tool to strengthen international peace and security and advocates its universalization. The Kyrgyz Republic reaffirmed its commitment to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by acceding in 2004 to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. In 2007, it acceded to the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism advanced by the Presidents of the Russian Federation and the United States on 15 June 2006 at the Group of Eight summit in Saint Petersburg.

We are convinced that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones throughout the world represents a genuine contribution to the process of nuclear disarmament. At the regional level, the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia was signed in September 2006. Kyrgyzstan, an initiator and active participant in creating the Zone, attaches great importance to this issue. This and the other aforementioned examples are evidence of the firm and unflagging commitment of the Kyrgyz Republic to issues of nuclear disarmament.

I take this opportunity to express gratitude to those States and international organizations for their comprehensive support for our initiative in Central Asia. It is well known that several General Assembly resolutions were adopted on this subject in the years leading to the creation of the Central Asian Zone, and the initiative was incorporated into the Outcome Document of the NPT Review Conference of 2005. We also express our deep gratitude to States of Central Asia for their designation of the Kyrgyz Republic as the depositary of the Treaty, which attested to the high degree of trust and recognition of the meaningful

contribution made by Kyrgyzstan to bringing the initiative to fruition.

Throughout these years, as it ensured its own security and reaffirmed its proclaimed policy of openness and good-neighbourliness, the Kyrgyz Republic, together with other States of the region and international organizations, and with the support of the United Nations and the IAEA, has worked actively to turn Central Asia into a nuclear-weapon-free zone and continues to advocate the further strengthening of the disarmament process and the nuclear non-proliferation regime, as well as the rapid entry into force of the CTBT and the reinvigoration of negotiations to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones. This year, States of the Central Asian region intend to present a draft resolution on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. In this regard, we would be grateful for the support of delegations for our draft resolution.

Kyrgyzstan expresses deep concern over the problem of appropriate storage of waste from the production of nuclear weapons. Kyrgyzstan still has storage sites with radioactive waste on its territory. Their due maintenance and preventing a potential regional environmental disaster are high on our agenda. The Kyrgyz Republic also advocates developing a multilateral dialogue on issues related to the prohibition of the production of fissile materials, the prevention of an arms race in space, and nuclear disarmament.

We attach great importance to Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), aimed at countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and related technologies and materials. We agree that it is necessary to prevent non-State actors from acquiring access to nuclear, chemical and biological weaponry, technologies, materials and delivery systems, including through the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004). To that end, the Government of Kyrgyzstan is working to strengthen the country's export control system. We believe that all States need to coordinate their export control regimes in order to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. States with advanced technology in weapons of mass destruction must prevent it from falling into the hands of other States or groups that could threaten the world with the use of weapons of mass destruction.

Kyrgyzstan is concerned about the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and is taking relevant steps at the national level to counter their illicit trafficking. We advocate the active involvement of the United Nations in addressing this issue. Kyrgyzstan supports the proposal to draft legally binding international instruments to regulate, mark and track small arms and light weapons and to counter illegal brokering.

We believe that close attention should be paid to the conventional weapons control regime. We use this favourable opportunity to overcome the mistrust that exists between countries and to create a climate of universal understanding, transparency and cooperation that will lead to arms reductions. We regret the lack of progress at the Conference on Disarmament. Kyrgyzstan advocates the developing of multilateral dialogue on the prohibition of the production of fissile material, the prevention of an arms race, and nuclear disarmament in that forum.

With respect to other security issues, Kyrgyzstan considers the problem of information security to be extremely important. We see the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation as an important way to deter the spread of missiles that pose a threat to international peace and security. Kyrgyzstan is considering the possibility of acceding to that instrument.

Mr. Christian (Ghana): At the outset, Sir, permit me to join other speakers in congratulating you on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Committee and to wish you every success in your important mission. To this end, I wish to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement and the African Union, my delegation associates itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia and Nigeria respectively on behalf of these organizations.

A year ago, we met in this room with a shared goal of taking appropriate realistic measures towards abating the despair and disquiet over the challenges impinging on global peace and security, in accordance with one of the cardinal obligations of our Organization as envisioned by the founding fathers. As we begin our session, it behooves each one of us separately and collectively to undertake a critical introspection to ascertain whether the goals that we set

for ourselves under this mandate have been attained, either partially or wholly. After all, the world outside will assess our stewardship not by our eloquent rhetoric but by concrete and progressive results.

Developments over the past year, especially recent events, have raised concern about their ramifications for the already fragile international security environment. We are indeed living in a period of uncertainties precipitated and perpetuated by a far more unpredictable array of challenges, including worsening geopolitical tension, soaring military expenditures, growing threats of terrorism and fears over the fate of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

As this grim reality unfolds, it is imperative for the international community to strive to redress decades of missed opportunities and broken promises by collectively pursuing bold and realistic measures to save the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime from plunging into an irredeemable abyss. This goal can be realized only if Member States eschew unilateralism and embrace the noble values of cooperation and multilateralism, underpinned by flexibility and compromise, which have been widely recognized as the only viable option for the pursuit of constructive results in the disarmament and non-proliferation realm.

Given the fear of horizontal and vertical nuclear proliferation, exacerbated by the threat of nuclear terrorism, we cannot deny the fact that the world is on the verge of a new phase in the nuclear dilemma. Admittedly, some progress has been made over the years, including the reduction of stockpiles, the closure of test sites, the maintenance of nuclear test moratoriums and the retirement of various warheads and their delivery systems, as well as an inconsequential increase in the number of nuclear-weapon States. While welcoming these developments, we are equally disturbed that the existence of about 27,000 nuclear warheads, some on high alert, and threats of proliferation could accentuate the general fear that the world remains insecure and vulnerable to mass destruction. Unless all nuclear weapons are verifiably and irreversibly eliminated, we, including the possessors, will continue to be haunted by this nightmarish scenario.

Despite the near convergence of views on the interconnectivity between nuclear disarmament and

non-proliferation, it is disheartening that a few countries continue to place emphasis on the latter with less focus on disarmament. This lopsided approach, which is at variance with the position of the majority of Member States, will not succeed. In this connection, we wish to stress that the most feasible, practical and sustainable path for the pursuance of nuclear non-proliferation is through tangible progress in disarmament.

To this end, we strongly urge nuclear-weapon States to exhibit exemplary leadership by faithfully and scrupulously abiding by their treaty obligations. Otherwise, the prediction made over 50 years ago that the world would witness 20 or more States with nuclear weapons will come to fruition in the not-too-distant future. Indeed, the increasing clarion call across the globe for the elimination of these weapons, spearheaded by distinguished statesmen, is eloquent testimony to the disappointment of the majority of humanity over our failure to advance this cause. The momentum is building, and we should take the requisite measures to assume our leadership position if we are to play a meaningful role in the advancement of the disarmament and non-proliferation process.

Undoubtedly, a major factor in the abysmal developments in the area of international peace and security is the apparent resolve of some State parties, albeit a few, to disavow their obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and other related agreements, notably the 1995 and 2000 Review Conference Outcome Documents. Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, are the very foundations of the Treaty and every effort should be made to refrain from placing a premium on any particular leg of the tripod.

Despite its relevant deficiency, we cannot and should not allow the persistent erosion of the credibility of the NPT, which we all reckon to be the fulcrum for the attainment of the non-proliferation regime and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. It is for this reason that we consider the 2010 Review Conference to be an opportune moment for containing and reversing the accrescent pessimism over the fate of the Treaty. We cannot afford to fail at this critical period, since the consequences would be graver still.

Although my delegation has strong reservations about the focus on non-proliferation, we have been surprised by the lukewarm reaction of some countries promoting the non-proliferation cause to the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and negative security assurances, which are laudable measures that have been recognized as imperative to the global non-proliferation goal. We exhort the nuclear-weapon States positively to revise their positions with a view to supporting, without reservation, the ideals of nuclear-weapon-free zones and also favourably to consider the request of non-nuclear-weapon States for the codification of negative security assurances. Given the reality of conditions in the Middle East, my delegation repeats its call for all stakeholders to pursue in good faith the implementation of the resolution on a nuclear-weapon-free zone for the region, as stipulated in the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.

While the predominance of weapons of mass destruction is understandable, it should not diminish our focus on the regulation and reduction of conventional arms. Despite the enormous achievements over the years in addressing the menace, the proliferation of these weapons, especially illicit small arms and light weapons, continues to pose a threat to peace and security in many regions. We welcome the conclusion of the recent review meeting and stress that the momentum should be maintained, since without our collective effort the common goal of eradicating these lethal instruments would be a mirage.

It is a truism that the dividends of progressive development in the disarmament realm extend beyond the confines of international peace and security to include economic development and the promotion of human rights. Is it not therefore a sad commentary that, while \$1.3 trillion was expended on global defence in 2007, millions of people continue to live below the poverty line? It is these unfortunate persons, living at the edge of life, who become easy prey for recruitment by callous persons determined to cause havoc and mayhem in societies through terrorist activities.

Although we all concede that the threats confronting the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime are daunting, with steadfast resolve underpinned by an unwavering commitment to our obligations, we should surmount these challenges.

Mr. Çorman (Turkey): I should like to begin by joining previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your well-deserved election. We are confident that your leadership and experience will steer the work of the First Committee to a successful outcome. You can count on our support during the course of the deliberations.

Turkey favours global overall disarmament and supports all efforts towards increased international security and stability through arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament. Turkey is a party to all major international non-proliferation instruments and export control regimes and wishes to see the universalization, effective and coordinated implementation, and further strengthening of these measures. We therefore firmly support the revitalization of the international disarmament agenda through coordinated efforts in which the United Nations should play a more effective role.

At the heart of these measures lies the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which Turkey regards as the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime. We are committed to the full implementation of the NPT in all its three mutually reinforcing pillars: non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The universalization of the Treaty, the strengthening of the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the reinforcement of export controls and the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty are the essential contours for the sustainability of the NPT regime in the long run. We support the decisions and the resolution adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

We are dedicated to full compliance with the NPT regime, including the comprehensive safeguards agreements and their additional protocols, and will continue working constructively towards a substantive outcome for the 2010 NPT Review Conference. Turkey will also actively contribute to the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency during its present tenure on the Agency's Board of Governors. Turkey also welcomes the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones freely arrived at by the countries of the various regions. In this context, we support in principle the establishment of an effectively verifiable zone free

of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery in the Middle East.

Turkey also supports efforts aimed at helping the Conference on Disarmament to resume its negotiating role as the world's single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament. As one of the 2008 Presidents of the Conference, Turkey believes that the Conference on Disarmament has a major role to play on nuclear issues, a fissile material cut-off treaty, parallel advances on negative security assurances and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We regard the proposal concerning a programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament, contained in document CD/1840, as a good means to resume its negotiating role.

We attach great importance to the alleviation, through peaceful means and as soon as possible, of the ongoing crisis regarding the scope and nature of Iran's nuclear programme. We share the continuing concern of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Turkey encourages Iran to implement all measures required to build confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear programme at the earliest possible date, as called for by the relevant Security Council resolutions. Turkey will continue to support and facilitate the diplomatic process to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue.

The denuclearization of the Korean peninsula remains a regional and global priority. We consider the agreement of 13 February to be an important step towards achieving the goal of the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. Turkey hopes that conditions can be created for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to return to the non-proliferation Treaty at the earliest possible date and for the resumption by the International Atomic Energy Agency of comprehensive safeguards.

We consider the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons 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 to be two important components of the global system against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Turkey does not possess any such weapons and reiterates its call for wider adherence to and effective implementation of these Conventions. In

particular, we support efforts to promote the universality of these instruments in the Mediterranean basin, the Middle East and adjacent regions. In this vein, we will host a seminar next spring in Istanbul, in cooperation with the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, on the universalization of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The proliferation of the means of delivery of weapons of mass destruction is another pressing issue that needs to be effectively addressed by the international community. Indeed, Turkey is concerned at the progressive increase in the range and accuracy of ballistic missiles. Within this framework, we consider the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation to be a practical step towards an internationally accepted legal framework in this field. We therefore wish to see the universalization of The Hague Code of Conduct endeavour.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery become all the more worrying in the context of terrorism. While condemning terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, we also need to remain vigilant about the risk of the acquisition by terrorists of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. Hence, we fully support international efforts to prevent the acquisition and use by terrorists of such weapons and to enhance the safety and security of radioactive materials and sources. Utmost attention should be paid to preventing terrorists from gaining access to nuclear materials and other components of these weapons. We should devise new measures to combat the illicit trade in sensitive nuclear equipment and technology. In this context, we call for adherence to and effective implementation of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism and the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material.

Turkey continues to support the work of the Committee established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which complements international efforts against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Likewise, we regard the Proliferation Security Initiative as an important scheme complementing existing international mechanisms.

The proliferation of conventional weapons is also a cause of concern for Turkey. The excessive

accumulation and uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons pose a significant threat to peace and security, as well as to the social and economic development of many countries. There is also a very close and disturbing relationship between the illicit trade in arms and terrorism. As a country suffering from terrorist attacks, Turkey will continue actively to contribute to all efforts within the United Nations and other forums to foster international cooperation in the fight against terrorism, including through the establishment of effective norms and rules aimed at eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

Turkey remains committed to the effective implementation and further strengthening 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, and will continue to support the conclusion of an arms trade treaty, which should halt the unregulated and uncontrolled trade in conventional arms worldwide and establish common standards for their global trade. We would like to express our satisfaction with the adoption of a substantive report at the Third Biennial Meeting of the States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action, which took place in New York from 14 to 18 July 2008. We attach importance to the implementation of the recommendations and the establishment of a follow-up mechanism to the Programme.

Another worrying issue in the field of conventional weapons is the scourge of the indiscriminate and inhumane weapons known as anti-personnel landmines. As a party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction since 2004, Turkey fully supports efforts for the universalization and effective implementation of the Convention and the vision of a world free from anti-personnel mines. We continue to pursue the destruction process of the stockpiled anti-personnel landmines with the utmost care, and the Turkish munitions disposal facility at present operates at the maximum possible capacity. Let me take this opportunity to appeal to States that have not yet done so to accede to the Convention.

Like many other countries, Turkey is concerned at the deteriorating situation in the field of disarmament and international security in recent years.

The Chairperson: I am sorry to interrupt the representative of Turkey, but I am trying to implement the rules that we agreed on, namely, that delegations should limit their statements to 10 minutes when speaking in a national capacity and to 15 minutes when speaking in a regional capacity. I have been trying to be very flexible, but on the other hand I am trying to be very strict about enforcing the rules that members have agreed upon. I am not happy about interrupting anybody, but if I have to I will. I apologize for that but I do not have any other choice.

Mr. Mohamad (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Let me begin by congratulating you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your election to steer this important Committee. We endorse the statements made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the African Group.

The First Committee is meeting this year in a climate of uncertainty and ambiguity with respect to the issues of disarmament, security and international peace. If we look closely at developments in certain hotbeds of tension throughout the world, we will see the extent of the lack of collective security in the broadest sense of that term. Security is to be realized through multilateral mechanisms of disarmament, and controlling the risks stemming from the proliferation of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery is the only way to ensure lasting collective security. This will clearly not take place so long as the major Powers continue to maintain their nuclear weapons, increase the development of weapons of mass destruction and biological and chemical weapons, and pursue the unbridled race to carry out nuclear tests, either hidden or in public, based on the concept of proactive prevention or on protecting their national security.

On the other hand, disarmament mechanisms continue to be stagnant. There have been a number of setbacks over the past 10 years with respect to any number of arms conventions, instruments and protocols. The setbacks are due to the fact that the major Powers, particularly those States with nuclear and missile technologies, have shirked their obligations. The frequency with which relevant resolutions of the Organization are put to the vote highlights the fact that most Members support the mechanisms of disarmament but fail to effectively implement them. Last year, we began to restructure the disarmament mechanisms by strengthening the role of

the United Nations in this area. Unfortunately, no serious progress has been made; similarly, no meaningful contribution has been made in terms of United Nations action in the area of disarmament.

In a report submitted earlier to the Committee, the High Representative of the Secretary-General underscored the fact that military spending has increased by 37 per cent over the past 10 years. For the second time this year, his report underscores also that the rates of military spending have also increased greatly over the past year, confirming the fact that many countries are arming themselves and building their military capacities instead of addressing the humanitarian issues that are at the heart of the Millennium Development Goals, and stockpiling weapons of death and destruction instead of devoting resources and efforts to reconstruction and development. We reiterate the direct responsibilities of nuclear-weapon States, under specific timetables, to eliminate their stockpiles, end the nuclear weapons arms race, and confine tests to peaceful uses of nuclear energy and scientific research.

We reaffirm the need to create nuclear-weapon-free zones throughout the world. Such zones are more urgent today than in the past, and represent the shortest way to implement the relevant conventions and instruments and to establish an effective nuclear non-proliferation regime. Do we need to recall in this regard that many countries in regions of tension still lack such zones? The best example in that regard is the Middle East, where one single State, Israel, continues to impede the establishment of such a zone. It refuses systematically and openly to create such a zone and to submit its nuclear programme to the comprehensive safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

We therefore wish to affirm that the failure to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East is now a strategic threat, not only to the region but also to international peace and security. In this regard, I pay tribute to the pioneering African initiative to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa via the Pelindaba Treaty. The Sudan is a full party to that Treaty and calls on countries that have not yet signed it to do so without delay. We also affirm in this context the right of States to the peaceful use of nuclear energy and we reject denying them such a right under any pretext.

The Sudan was one of the first countries to accede to international conventions and instruments on disarmament, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Moreover, the Sudan played a pioneering role in the declaration of Africa as a nuclear-weapon-free zone. The Sudan is also playing an active regional role within the framework of efforts aimed at implementing the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. In this regard, Khartoum was the venue for the first conference of the African organization to implement the Convention on Chemical Weapons. That conference also recommended the declaration of Africa as a nuclear-weapon-free zone. We were also one of the first countries to accede to the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation.

With respect to conventional weapons, small arms and light weapons, the delegation of the Sudan reaffirms that the term we normally use to refer to such weapons is paradoxical, given the magnitude of the mass destruction caused by such small arms and light weapons in African countries afflicted by internal wars and conflicts.

Beyond the Sudan's international and regional contributions to the fight against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, we have been very active at the regional level via our national office to counter the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. That office has a broad range of laws to serve it such as legislation controlling the possession of such weapons, which is closely related to the trafficking of weapons, organized crime and transnational crime. For these reasons, we are trying to reassert control by working with other countries in the region. In this regard, we have worked to redraw boundaries so as to ensure that we can achieve these objectives.

In conclusion, the delegation of the Sudan is closely following efforts under way to elaborate a binding international convention on the transfer, import and export of these weapons. Unfortunately, certain States are attempting to exploit international organizations that try to mobilize support for such conventions. We are not certain what motives underlie such attempts.

Mr. Almaabri (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, Sir, allow me to express to you my most sincere congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee at this session. I am confident that your wisdom, skill and wide experience in conducting negotiations will contribute to achieving the desired goals. At the same time, I express the full willingness of my delegation to cooperate with you and the Bureau in order to achieve our desired goals.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. It wishes to reiterate that the Republic of Yemen deeply believes in the principles and purposes of nuclear disarmament, in eliminating weapons of mass destruction and in nuclear non-proliferation. It has therefore signed and ratified all the multilateral treaties in this respect.

Over the past two years, my Government has worked assiduously to stop the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. At present, it is making strenuous and sincere efforts to monitor the possession and carrying of weapons and to prevent them from being carried in districts and main cities. It has also closed down shops selling weapons and confiscated the weapons seized. In order to uproot this phenomenon once and for all, it has rescinded all licences that previously allowed some people to carry weapons.

My delegation welcomes the conclusions of the Group of Governmental Experts on the illicit brokering of small arms and light weapons in June 2007 (A/62/163 and Corr.1) and the meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts on the feasibility, scope and draft parameters for a comprehensive, legally binding instrument for import, export and transfer of conventional weapons, held in February 2008 in order to address constructively this scourge, which directly affects peace and security in many communities and facilitates the flow of weapons to non-State parties, among them terrorist groups or those connected with transnational organized crime and other criminals. If unchecked, this phenomenon will ultimately impede development, perpetuate poverty and backwardness, increase unemployment, and spread deadly epidemics and other conditions favouring the emergence of terrorist organizations and groups and widening the circles of violence and instability beyond national and regional boundaries.

On that basis, countries producing and exporting weapons of all kinds must shoulder their moral and humanitarian responsibility towards those States on which such weapons are dumped. They should do so by granting technical and financial assistance to the affected countries in order to help them overcome their multidimensional suffering, the repercussions of which cause instability and exacerbate all aspects of economic, social and cultural problems.

My delegation hopes that a universal commitment to the relevant multilateral treaties will lead to the elaboration of effective mechanisms to eliminate weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. In the meantime, countries should have access to nuclear technical capabilities for peaceful purposes. My delegation reiterates its call to turn the Middle East into a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. It also stresses the importance of Israel's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and subjecting all its nuclear installations to the comprehensive safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to reiterate that Yemen supports all international efforts to reach agreement on further preventive measures to curb the flow of weapons to non-State parties. It therefore engages in positive cooperation, coordination and consultation with all neighbouring countries in order to combat the flow of illicit weapons and the illicit possession of these weapons by any party so as to stop extremism and combat transnational organized crime. Our police and security forces have recently achieved reasonable success in this respect, despite our limited financial resources. Every effort is being made to maintain and safeguard security and stability throughout Yemeni territory.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): I congratulate you, Sir, on your election to preside over the Committee. May I also congratulate the entire Bureau, in which my delegation has full confidence, and pledge our support and cooperation. My delegation wishes to associate itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the African Group and the Non-Aligned Movement.

The world today continues to face threats and challenges in the area of disarmament that have a direct negative bearing on international peace and security. The threats and challenges are global, regional and

national and require a collective multilateral approach to address them. The United Nations, as an intergovernmental Organization with a universal membership, complemented by regional organizations and arrangements, offers the most comprehensive and effective forums for addressing the problems. My delegation once again reaffirms Tanzania's commitment to multilateralism and the United Nations in promoting and maintaining international peace and security.

In the multilateral framework of the United Nations, Member States have been able to agree on several instruments and arrangements on disarmament and arms control. Through such measures, Member States have been able to make some progress in destroying and reducing the production of arms and ammunition and their related systems, and continue to seek effective ways of controlling and regulating the movements of such arms.

Their efforts are commendable, but there are pitfalls and shortcomings in these otherwise enlightened international efforts. Fundamental prerequisites of these efforts are, first, the mobilization of sustainable political will and conviction in the inseparable nexus between disarmament and international peace and security; secondly, the conclusion of agreements on disarmament that are verifiable and able to be implemented; and, thirdly, securing the universality of such agreements through the United Nations. Tanzania pledges its unreserved support and commitment to supporting all the agreements to which we are a party and to participating fully in negotiating new instruments in the area of disarmament.

At the height of the cold war, the world was perched on a precarious balance of terror. The end of the cold war brought relief and ushered in better prospects for disarmament in both nuclear and conventional weapons. Indeed, some progress was noticeable. However, current trends are disconcerting. The Conference on Disarmament has moved nowhere, nuclear proliferation and technological sophistication are pushing new frontiers, while military posturing and strategic deployments by major military Powers in conventional terms are heading towards dangerous brinkmanship. The demand, supply and proliferation of small and light weapons continue unabated in the absence of an effective regime to govern the transfers

of conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons.

It should also be pointed out that the resources that go into research, development and investment in the armaments industries continue to outstrip investments in economic and human development. The achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, is seriously undermined by expenditures on armaments and likewise affected by the negative impacts of climate change, the oil crisis, the food crisis, and now the financial crisis in the world.

Africa is a continent of great potential. In recent years, the continent has shown positive signs of recovery. Today, Africa has fewer hot spots compared to the previous decade. Several countries that experienced internal conflict have steadily emerged out of conflict situations. In these areas, efforts are under way to ensure that they do not revert to conflict by stabilizing them through peacebuilding initiatives under the auspices of the United Nations and regional organizations.

In our deliberations on disarmament issues, it is worth revisiting and highlighting the role of confidence-building measures (CBMs). Military and non-military CBMs, or a combination of both, have proven to be useful instruments in facilitating the prevention and resolution of inter-State and intra-State conflicts. In Africa, such measures have successfully been used in different security and politically volatile situations to stabilize conditions in order to permit peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

At this juncture, I wish to recall Security Council resolution 1653 (2006) of January 2006, in which United Nations support for prevention and conflict resolution found expression in the framework of the Security, Stability and Development Pact in the Great Lakes Region of Central and East Africa. Through this framework, Member States, with the support and partnership of friendly countries and civil society, including international and local faith-based organizations, have been able to support peace initiatives in the region. Historical and political breakthroughs have been achieved in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo after years of protracted conflicts.

The situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is, however, still unstable. It requires

multiple approaches to address it, including the building of mutual trust through confidence-building measures among the parties involved. The States of the region, the African Union and the United Nations have a crucial and urgent role to play in that unstable region.

Tanzania and other countries in the Great Lakes region continue to suffer from the effects of the spread of illicit small arms and light weapons. The spread of these weapons is a continuing threat to law and order and to the overall stability of the region. My delegation is pleased with and commends the role of the United Nations in this area. We welcome the outcome of the Third Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, based in Lomé, Togo, has been very instrumental in developing capacities for addressing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, particularly in West Africa. We commend the work of the Centre, which has relevant application to other subregions of Africa. We appeal to the United Nations and other partners to continue supporting the Centre.

The Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons (RECSA) in East Africa, which has its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, has also been very active in promoting the disarmament and control of illicit small arms and light weapons among member States of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa. RECSA assists 12 States in the region to implement their national plans under the framework of the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons. We welcome the granting of observer status to RECSA by the United Nations in December 2007, and call on the United Nations and other development partners to continue assisting the Centre.

Apart from addressing the supply and demand sides of small arms and light weapons, there is a need to step up efforts to curb the trade and transfer aspects of such weapons. The control regime ought to pay particular attention to the trade and resupply of ammunition. Guns are functional and dangerous only if they are regularly loaded with ammunition. A cut in the flow of ammunition would go a long way towards demobilizing illicit arms and light weapons. 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 should pay particular attention to the transfer of ammunition, especially to non-State actors in conflict situations. The regime will be greatly strengthened by the proposed arms trade treaty that is currently being negotiated and needs to be concluded expeditiously.

Tanzania is among the 156 States that have thus far subscribed to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. In May 2008, at the Dublin Diplomatic Conference, we joined other States in adopting a landmark convention to ban cluster munitions, which cause unacceptable harm to civilians. The Convention on Cluster Munitions, which will open for signature in December 2008, is a remarkable instrument that incorporates humanitarian as well as human rights provisions. Unexploded submunitions can hamper the development prospects of thousands of people who must earn their own living. The initial response of the international community has been very encouraging. We hope that the Convention will receive the full support of the entire international community.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to reiterate the significance of the multilateral approach in our deliberations. Tanzania attaches great importance to this Committee as a forum for collective action to advance collective security in the world in all its aspects.

Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq): At the outset, Mr. Chairman, allow me to congratulate you on your unanimous election to preside over this year's session of the First Committee of the United Nations. I am confident that, under your able guidance and leadership, the First Committee will succeed this year in fulfilling the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly. I should also like to extend my congratulations to the other members of the Bureau on their election. Iraq associates itself with the Non-Aligned Movement statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia.

In accordance with Security Council resolution 1762 (2007), it was decided to terminate immediately the mandate of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC)

and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) under the relevant resolutions. The resolution noted that the continued operations of UNMOVIC and the IAEA's Iraq Nuclear Verification Office were no longer necessary to verify Iraqi compliance with its obligations under the relevant resolutions. It reaffirmed Iraq's disarmament obligations under relevant resolutions; acknowledged Iraq's constitutional commitment to non-proliferation, non-development, non-production and non-use of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and associated equipment, material, and technologies for use in the development, manufacture, production and use of such weapons, as well as delivery systems; and urged Iraq to continue implementing this commitment and to adhere to all applicable disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and related international agreements.

On 19 August 2008, Iraq signed its accession to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which is intended to enforce a comprehensive ban on all nuclear test explosions, stop the qualitative development of nuclear weapons, and pave the way towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Iraq also, with effect from 15 August 2007, acceded to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. The Convention has been in force for Iraq since 1 February 2008. Concerning the Convention on Cluster Munitions that was signed on 30 May 2008 in Dublin, the ratification of its accession is now progressing in the Iraqi Parliament.

Iraq reaffirms that achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament continues to be our highest priority. We remain alarmed by the threat to humanity posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons and of their possible use or threat of use, and we are deeply concerned over the slow pace of progress towards nuclear disarmament. We underline the need for all Members to fulfil their obligations in relation to nuclear disarmament and arms control and to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects. We call upon all Members to renew and fulfil their individual and collective commitments to multilateral cooperation as an important means of pursuing and achieving their common objectives in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Iraq calls upon the nuclear-weapon States to refrain from nuclear sharing for military purposes under any kind of security arrangements, in conformity

with their obligations. It also seeks the full implementation of the unequivocal undertaking given by them to the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals through an accelerated process of negotiations and through the full implementation of the 13 practical steps to advance systematically and progressively towards the nuclear-weapon-free world that they agreed to in 2000. Iraq is fully convinced that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the key instrument in efforts to halt the vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons and the essential foundation for nuclear disarmament.

Iraq supports the call for the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, in accordance with Security Council resolution 487 (1981) and relevant General Assembly resolutions adopted by consensus, and recalls that the 2000 NPT Review Conference reaffirmed the importance of Israel's accession to the NPT and placement of all its nuclear facilities under the comprehensive safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) towards realizing the goal of universal adherence to the Treaty in the Middle East. At the same time, Iraq reaffirms the basic and inalienable right of all States without discrimination to develop, research, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Iraq reaffirms that the IAEA is the competent authority responsible for verifying and assuring, in accordance with the statute of the IAEA and its safeguards system, compliance with its safeguards agreements with States parties undertaken in fulfilment of their obligations under paragraph 1 of article III of the NPT, with a view to preventing the diversion of nuclear energy from peaceful uses to nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We reaffirm that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and the most effective way of preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, consistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and international law and in conformity with Security Council resolution 1540 (2004).

Iraq expresses its firm support for unilateral, bilateral, regional and multilateral measures adopted by some Governments to reduce their military

expenditures, thereby contributing to strengthening regional and international peace and security.

Mr. Punkrasin (Thailand): At the outset, Sir, please allow my delegation to congratulate you on your election as Chairperson of the First Committee. Under your able guidance and leadership, we are confident that the outcome of our deliberations will be successful. My congratulations also go to all members of the Bureau. Thailand associates itself with the statements made previously by the representatives of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and of Myanmar on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In its national capacity, Thailand would like to share some additional views on disarmament issues.

The work of this Committee underpins the security pillar of the United Nations. A world of peace and security is in our collective interest and its advancement rests upon our shoulders. In the spirit of cooperation, the Thai delegation will render its fullest support to the endeavours of this Committee. In this regard, I wish to highlight a number of issues to which the Royal Thai Government has accorded priority in this sixty-third session.

Thailand is gravely concerned about the illicit trade, proliferation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons. Small arms and light weapons are crucial tools in the operations of transnational crimes, drug trafficking and terrorism. Violence associated with the use of small arms and light weapons has devastating consequences on human rights, human development and human security. Thailand faithfully implements the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects at the national and regional levels to curb the proliferation of those weapons. Thailand cooperates with other ASEAN countries to prevent transnational criminal syndicates and terrorist groups from acquiring small arms and light weapons. We believe the International Tracing Instrument is an effective mechanism that enables States to identify and trace, in a timely and reliable manner, the transfer and trade in illicit small arms and light weapons.

Thailand is convinced that armed violence negatively impacts on conditions conducive to development. Accordingly, Thailand has adopted the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and

Development and in June 2006 joined the core group in promoting the implementation of the Geneva Declaration. Thailand and Switzerland, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme, organized the Asia-Pacific Meeting on Armed Violence and Development in Bangkok in May this year. The outcome of the Meeting was the adoption of the Asia-Pacific Declaration on Armed Violence and Development — the Bangkok Declaration — by 23 countries. More recently, at the Ministerial Review Summit on the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, held in Geneva last month, the 85 countries participating in the Summit reaffirmed that development, peace and security, and human rights are interlinked. They also highlighted the indispensable role of national, regional and international development policies in the prevention of armed violence.

It goes without saying that small arms and light weapons can have equally as devastating an impact on global peace and security as weapons of mass destruction. Thailand is fully committed to the disarmament and non-proliferation of all types of weapons of mass destruction. We have joined all key international treaties and conventions and have complied with all obligations and commitments under these instruments, as well as the relevant Security Council resolutions.

With regard to the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, Thailand is fully committed to the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We take note of the conclusion of the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference, held in Geneva in May this year. My delegation hopes that it will help pave the way for further progress on consensus building, particularly for the third session of the NPT Preparatory Committee next year. In assessing the accomplishments of the NPT obligations, however, we do see the need to strike a balance between the issues under all clusters: non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

The Second Review Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC), held in April this year, underscored progress towards a world free of chemical weapons. Nevertheless, failure to destroy all

chemical weapons within the agreed deadline of 2015 would erode the credibility and effectiveness of the CWC. Thailand therefore reiterates its call upon possessor countries to eliminate their stockpiles within the set time frame.

Thailand commends the Implementation Support Unit of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC) for its work on advancing the agenda of biosafety and biosecurity, and welcomes the fruitful outcome of the recent Meeting of Experts of the BWC this past August.

I turn now to major safeguards and verification issues. Thailand supports the international community's efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Iranian nuclear issue through diplomatic means. While we fully support every NPT party's inalienable right to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, we believe that all three pillars of the NPT must be upheld equally. We therefore call on Iran to cooperate fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), especially in light of the latest report of the Director General, presented to the Board of Governors last week. At the same time, we urge all parties concerned to continue with constructive dialogue and to refrain from confrontation.

With regard to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Thailand shares with the international community an interest in seeing a peaceful, stable and denuclearized Korean peninsula. We note with concern the recent decision of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to reactivate its nuclear facilities in Yongbyon. This step backwards is regrettable. We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to allow IAEA inspectors back into the country to continue their verification work at the earliest opportunity. Diplomatic efforts through the Six-Party Talks and other forums are urgently required to avert a further worsening of the situation.

Thailand has long been an active proponent of the Bangkok Treaty establishing the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. Last year marked the tenth anniversary of the Treaty. It is the first and currently the only nuclear-weapon-free-zone Treaty of its kind in Asia and has been signed by all 10 ASEAN member countries. The Treaty underpins the non-proliferation and nuclear safety regime in South-East Asia. In light

of the essential contribution of the Treaty to the security of the region and Asia as a whole, the resolution on the subject was overwhelmingly supported at the sixty-second session of the General Assembly. It is Thailand's earnest hope that the nuclear-weapon States will be able to become parties to the Treaty in the near future.

Thailand recognizes the threat of terrorists' acquiring weapons of mass destruction and joins in the international effort to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Later this month, Thailand will co-organize with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs a regional workshop in Bangkok on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004).

It is incumbent upon this Committee to make a perceptible contribution to the advancement of the global disarmament agenda. A more stable and secure world is the basis for a more prosperous world. My delegation reaffirms its full collaboration under your guidance, Sir, and will actively engage with all countries to bring this session to a successful conclusion.

Mrs. Phommachanh (Lao People's Democratic Republic): Allow me on behalf of the Lao People's Democratic Republic delegation to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the Bureau on your election. We look forward to working with you and assure you of our full cooperation and support in the discharge of your responsibilities. My delegation fully associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and of Myanmar on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

To date, not much progress has been made in the field of international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. Since the failure of the 2005 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), we have witnessed consistent setbacks in the multilateral disarmament machinery. These ongoing impasses in the major non-proliferation and disarmament negotiations will unquestionably continue to undermine international peace and security. Only through political commitment and collective effort can this current stalemate be resolved. In this respect, it is particularly important to address disarmament and non-proliferation issues through a multilateral approach.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is vital to global security and the non-proliferation regime. There is no doubt that nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy are mutually reinforcing and remain the cornerstones to achieving the goals of the NPT. The international community should therefore maintain a proper balance between nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. In this respect, there is an urgent need for States parties to the NPT to comply fully with their obligations under the Treaty. It is our hope that the States parties to the NPT will demonstrate greater political commitment towards ensuring the success of the NPT Review Conference in 2010.

This year marks the twelfth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The Treaty remains a significant instrument in promoting both nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. The importance of achieving universal adherence to the CTBT and the necessity of accelerating its early entry into force are therefore matters of high priority. In this regard, we welcome the launch of the fourth CTBT ministerial meeting in New York in September 2008, which aimed at facilitating the entry into force of the CTBT. The joint ministerial statement issued on that occasion will contribute positively to the outcome of the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in many regions of the world significantly helps to promote nuclear disarmament, prevent nuclear proliferation, and enhance peace and security at the regional and global levels. In this regard, the establishment of the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone contributes to strengthening nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. We wish therefore to underscore the importance of nuclear-weapon States acceding to the Protocol annexed to the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty in order for the Treaty to come into full operation.

The illicit transfer, manufacture and circulation of small arms and light weapons remain one of the major threats to human security and continue to ruin hundreds of thousands of innocent lives. In this regard, we consider the adoption of the Final Outcome Document of the Third Biennial Meeting of States to Consider 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, held in July 2008, to be another contribution to the fight against the proliferation of the illicit transfer, manufacture and circulation of small arms and light weapons.

The harmful effects of cluster munitions, which create untold suffering to civilian populations in many countries, are a particular cause of concern. As one of the countries heavily affected by cluster munitions, the Lao People's Democratic Republic welcomed the Dublin Diplomatic Conference held in May 2008, which culminated in the landmark adoption of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The opening for signature of the Convention in Oslo, Norway, on 3 December 2008 will significantly contribute to protecting civilians and addressing the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions.

We underscore the importance and relevance of the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament, and the United Nations Disarmament Commission as the specialized deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery. However, the lack of consensus on a programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament and the failure of the Commission to adopt recommendations at the end of its three-year cycle are hindrances to the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery. It is hoped that the necessary flexibility will be demonstrated and collective effort made to move forward in the pursuit of the objectives of international arms control and disarmament.

To conclude, the international community must not falter in its commitment to tackling the continuing challenges in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. We therefore hope that the First Committee, as an essential body of the General Assembly to discuss disarmament and international security issues, will be productive in addressing the threats to global peace and security and accelerating progress towards achieving total and complete disarmament.

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to remind members once again that the cut-off for the list of participants is at 6 p.m. today. Representatives have until that time to inscribe their names on the official list for the general debate.

I call on the Secretary of the Committee to make any further announcements.

Mr. Sareva (Secretary of the Committee): To recall what I said to the Committee yesterday, the list of speakers for the clusters in the thematic debate is

open and members are kindly requested to communicate their desire to speak during any of the thematic clusters to Mr. Renato Monteiro either by e-mail, by phone or in person.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.