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New York

Chair: Mr. Viinanen . . . . . (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda items 87 to 106 (*continued*)

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

The Chair: Before turning to the remaining list of speakers on cluster 6, "Regional disarmament and security", the Committee will hear a briefing by His Excellency Ambassador Jim McLay, Chair of the Open-ended Meeting of Governmental Experts on the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Their Aspects, which took place in May.

Before giving the floor to Ambassador McLay, I want to congratulate him once again on the victory of the All Blacks in the Rugby World Cup yesterday in New Zealand.

Mr. McLay (New Zealand), Chair, Open-ended Meeting of Governmental Experts on the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Their Aspects): I suspect I am the only New Zealander actually working today, other than Ambassador Higgie. All our compatriots, however, are celebrating, and with good reason.

As you, Sir, have said, it was my privilege to chair the Open-ended Meeting of Governmental Experts on the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Their Aspects (MGE), which took place in May this year, and I appreciate this opportunity to report on the MGE to the Committee.

It was the first meeting of its kind on the Programme of Action, which meant that there were few precedents for the MGE as to its role, objectives, themes, format and outcomes. These had to be developed by the Chair through an intensive process of consultation and preparation. Significant effort was also required to encourage participation by relevant experts and to promote interactive practical discussions. All that paid off, and we had a vibrant and substantive Meeting that has, I believe, made a practical contribution to the implementation of the Programme of Action.

How did we go about preparing for the MGE? What were its key elements? What were its main outcomes?

First, as I explained, the MGE required careful, sustained preparation. We began with a series of open consultations in New York and Geneva, supplemented by many informal consultations with regional groups, and also letters from the Chair. We also established an open-ended informal advisory process to support the Chair. That process, used for the first time at the MGE, was important for eliciting substantive input and resolving any disagreements. While time-consuming, it enabled early agreement on the role, objectives and formats of the Meeting and provided a transparent and inclusive process for selecting the Meeting's themes.

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Most States stressed that, if it was to add value, the MGE should be different in form and content from other meetings within the Programme of Action process, that it should focus on a small number of themes related to practical implementation, and that it should involve interactive discussions among genuine experts. That was the vision at the centre of our preparations — a meeting that would support national and regional implementation by sharing experience and best practice and facilitating in-depth expert dialogue.

The next challenge was to reach agreement on themes relevant to most States, particularly those most affected by small arms-related violence and those focused on supporting practical implementation. Eventually, we agreed on the themes of marking, record-keeping and cooperation in tracing, with a focus on implementation of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, and also agreed on the cross-cutting topics of national frameworks, regional cooperation and international assistance in capacity-building.

Given the highly technical nature of these issues, it was crucial that there be sufficient representation of relevant experts — in this case, national officials responsible for the marking, record-keeping and tracing of small arms and light weapons — and especially that we should attract experts from States most affected by small arms-related violence. Moreover, these experts had to be fully briefed on the nature and purpose of the Meeting and they had to be empowered to participate in the discussions.

To that end, after the selection of the themes, I wrote to all Member States identifying the relevant expertise and encouraging the attendance of national experts. A voluntary sponsorship programme was established by the United Nations Development Programme to facilitate the attendance of developing States. The generosity of donors, in particular Australia, Norway, Spain, Finland, New Zealand, Hungary and Austria, enabled the participation of 27 relevant experts, which proved crucial to the credibility of the Meeting, the quality of its discussions and its contribution to capacity-building in the most affected countries.

However, a number of factors, including time constraints and uncertainty about funding criteria and availability, resulted in a significant underspend of those funds, and funding for some experts was not confirmed until the last working day before the Meeting. For future such meetings, longer lead times and clearer criteria will be important to avoiding a repeat of those problems.

To help participants prepare for each session, short discussion papers were prepared for each theme, providing background information, outlining existing standards and commitments, and posing a number of questions for participants to consider. The participation of international, regional and subregional organizations, and civil society was also important, with representatives of INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and numerous regional organizations all playing important roles.

Agreeing on a meeting format that encouraged focused interactive expert discussions was also a top priority, and in the New York context it proved extremely challenging to organize a genuinely interactive discussion among technical experts. Practical considerations, such as the availability of meeting rooms and conference services, meant that, despite strong support, a workshop format with breakout sessions could not be achieved. Instead, the MGE was structured around six sessions, each corresponding to one of its main themes. Each began with an introduction of the relevant discussion paper, expert presentations and case studies setting out key issues.

In the discussions that followed, we discouraged lengthy, prepared statements, and representatives were asked to speak frankly and to respond to points raised by other speakers. For the most part, that worked well, with participants becoming increasingly open and interactive as the week progressed. That approach did, however, require active chairmanship to stimulate discussion by regularly posing questions for participants and, after some interventions, asking follow-up questions.

While the extent and quality of expert participation was pleasing, and increased as the week progressed, at future Meetings even more could be done to encourage delegations to empower experts to participate freely and actively in discussions. While for this Meeting we could not get agreement on a more flexible application of the Programme of Action's rules of procedure that might have allowed representatives of civil society to speak at the end of each discussion, it is still my firm belief that that would be a better way to structure non-governmental organization participation in an expert meeting of this

nature. States might like to consider that for future MGEs on the clear understanding it does not establish a precedent for other United Nations meetings.

As organizers, we also encouraged a number of relevant side events held at the margins of the MGE, which considerably extended the breadth and quality of the formal discussions. In addition, during the week my Mission hosted a working reception focused on cooperation and assistance, providing an informal setting for donors and recipients of small arms-related assistance to discuss priorities and initiatives. The feedback from that was extremely positive.

Two key documents emerged from the MGE; both have been issued as United Nations documents and can be found on the Programme of Action Implementation Support System website in all six official languages. At the end of the MGE, a formal, largely procedural report on the Meeting was issued as A/CONF.192/MGE/2011/1.

There is also a substantive Chair's summary of the key themes that emerged from the discussions, issued as document A/66/157. To ensure maximum benefits are derived from the MGE, I encourage States to distribute that summary to participants and more broadly to other relevant national officials.

As the week progressed, the Chair's summary was prepared in close consultation with participants through regular oral summaries. It sought to present an accurate and balanced summary of the discussions. It was, however, prepared under my responsibility as Chair and did not claim to cover all issues or to represent any consensus view. The status of these outcome documents was, as can be imagined, a point of some discussion and contention in the weeks leading up to the Meeting. By the end of the week, however, given the technical nature of discussions and the limited time available, there seemed to be broad agreement that a Chair's summary captured the substantive themes from the discussions, and I would urge consideration of a similar approach at future meetings.

I will not repeat the detail of the Chair's summary but do note some of the main themes that emerged, including, first, the utility of successful tracing for identifying illicit diversion and preventing violent crime, and the interdependence of effective marking, record-keeping and tracing systems; second, the challenges for effective marking and tracing posed by recent trends in firearms design; third, the identification of key elements of effective record-keeping systems, including reliable marking and weapons identification; fourth, the central role of INTERPOL's information infrastructure and bilateral and regional arrangements in successful tracing and cooperation; fifth, the importance of accurate weapons identification; sixth, the value of an integrated approach to marking, record-keeping and tracing; seventh, the crucial contribution of regional organizations and relevant international bodies, such as INTERPOL and UNODC; and finally, the need for targeted, sustained international assistance and capacity-building.

Examples of good practice and practical proposals for strengthening national marking, record-keeping and tracing systems were also outlined in the summary report. Two other points also require brief attention. First, participants highlighted the low level of reporting on International Tracing Instrument implementation and the small number of States that had advised related points of contact, although I understand that since the Meeting there has been significant improvement in both areas.

Secondly, it was suggested that to facilitate effective marking and tracing, a technical committee of Government and industry representatives should be established to assess the implications of recent trends in firearms manufacturing. That is something that States might consider at next year's Review Conference.

The MGE was a very rewarding meeting to Chair. It appears to have made a real contribution to implementing both the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument. That was evident in the frank, in-depth exchanges during the Meeting and in what I have heard since about bilateral collaboration flowing from meetings that took place at the margins. I strongly urge next year's Review Conference to consider what role similar meetings might play in the next Programme of Action review cycle.

I also firmly believe that this year's MGE only scratched the surface of what can be achieved through such meetings. Future meetings might consider how such innovative formats could stimulate frank and interactive discussion, and we might also use them as a neutral, practically focused setting for deepening mutual understanding on issues where discussions at the political level have encountered difficulties. Such meetings have the potential to foster an international community of experts committed to information

exchange and other forms of peer support for their efforts to implement the Programme of Action.

I thank all States for their support, input, patience and flexibility during the preparations for the Meeting and at the MGE itself. I am especially grateful to those who participated in the informal advisory process that assisted the Chair.

Finally, I thank those at the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, and my own team at the New Zealand Mission to the United Nations for their tireless work to ensure that the Meeting was a success — an outcome that most of us agreed was achieved.

The Chair: I thank Ambassador McLay for his very thoughtful presentation. We very much value the work he did in the spring and has done every day since then.

I shall now give the floor to the remaining speakers on the list for "Regional disarmament and security" who wish to make statements or introduce draft resolutions under that cluster.

I call on the representative of Egypt to introduce draft resolutions A/C.1/66/L.1 and A/C.1/66/L.2.

Mr. Aboul Enein (Egypt): I have the pleasure of addressing the Committee today to formally introduce two draft resolutions of paramount importance to the peace and security of the Middle East region. These are draft resolutions A/C.1/66/L.1, entitled "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East", and A/C.1/66/L.2, entitled "The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East".

Draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.1 reiterates the exact substantive content of resolution 65/42, adopted by consensus under the same agenda item, with only the necessary technical updates reflecting one of the most important regional aspirations supported by the General Assembly since 1974. The draft resolution embodies both regional and international visions for the future of the Middle East, where nuclear weapons should have no place.

Our vision for a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East requires solid international resolve and urgent international action in order to make a genuine contribution to international peace and security. We therefore look forward to the continued strong support of all member States to ensure its adoption by consensus as a reflection of the General Assembly's sustained common determination to fulfil its objectives.

Bearing in mind that the consensus reached by the General Assembly since its thirty-fifth session that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East would greatly enhance international peace and security, the preamble emphasizes the call upon all parties to take practical steps for the implementation of the proposal to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East and to refrain on a reciprocal basis from producing, acquiring or in any other way possessing nuclear weapons and nuclear explosive devices, while agreeing to place their nuclear facilities under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards; and recognizes the importance of credible regional security, including the establishment of a mutually verifiable nuclear-weapon-free zone. It also reaffirms the inalienable right of all States to acquire and develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

The operative part urges all parties to consider taking practical and urgent steps for the implementation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East; invites the countries concerned to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); and calls upon all countries of the region that have not yet done so to place all their nuclear activities under International Atomic Energy Agency comprehensive safeguards.

It also invites those countries not to develop, produce, test or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or permit the stationing on their territories, or territories under their control, of nuclear weapons or nuclear explosive devices, and invites other States to render their assistance in the establishment of the zone and at the same time to refrain from any action that runs counter to both the letter and the spirit of the present draft resolution.

Finally, it requests the Secretary-General to pursue consultations and to seek views on measures with a view to moving towards the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East.

Draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.2, entitled "The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East", uses the same substantive elements and text of General Assembly resolution 65/88, with the necessary technical updates. The draft resolution is being presented by Egypt and

sponsored by all the States members of the League of Arab States: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Palestine and Egypt.

The preamble of the draft resolution is both cognizant of the fact that the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the region of the Middle East would pose a serious threat to international peace and security, and concerned about the threats posed by their proliferation to the security and stability of the Middle East region. It recalls the decision on principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament adopted by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, and recognizes with satisfaction that the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the NPT called upon those remaining States not party to the Treaty to accede to it, thereby accepting an international, legally binding commitment not to acquire nuclear weapons or nuclear explosive devices and to accept Agency safeguards on all their nuclear activities.

The preamble also notes with satisfaction that the Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference (NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vol. I)) emphasized the importance of a process leading to the full implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East and decided, inter alia, that the Secretary-General and the sponsors of the 1995 resolution, in consultation with the States of the region, would convene a conference in 2012, to be attended by all the States of the Middle East, on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

The operative section of the draft resolution reaffirms the importance of Israel's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards, in realizing the goal of universal adherence to the Treaty in the Middle East; and calls upon that State to accede to the Treaty without further delay; not to develop, produce, test or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons; to renounce possession of nuclear weapons; and to place all its unsafeguarded nuclear facilities under full-scope Agency safeguards as an important confidence-building measure among all States of the region and as a step towards enhancing peace and security.

The two draft resolutions are scheduled for adoption on 25 or 26 October. Egypt is confident of the continued consensus on the draft resolution entitled "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East". Last year, resolution 65/88, on the risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East, enjoyed the support of 172 States in the General Assembly. We look forward to a continued increase in international support for this important draft resolution before the Committee and invite all States that did not support it to reconsider their position and to join the international community in supporting this year's draft resolution.

The Chair: I now give the floor to the representative of Peru to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.16.

Mr. Aquino (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Latin America and the Caribbean is a diverse region. Various ideologies, forms of Government and different levels of development coexist within the region. Nevertheless, it is homogenous in terms of the challenges that it faces: poverty, social exclusion, unemployment, illiteracy, malnutrition, armed violence, and protection of the environment and of democracy, among many other challenges. These challenges are shared by most of the countries of the region although — as is worth pointing out — to varying degrees.

In order to address these challenges, Governments require, in addition to political resolve, technical instruments and economic resources. A large share of the latter are squandered due to the negative effects of armed violence in many countries of the region, which is the outcome, inter alia, of the illicit trade in arms. Another portion of these resources is wasted absurdly on unbridled expenditure on arms in the region. Addressing this situation will require us to join forces to develop activities aimed at the implementation of peace and disarmament measures linked to measures to promote economic and social development.

To that end, 25 years ago the General Assembly created the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean through resolution 41/60 J and tasked it with providing substantive support for initiatives and activities of States of the region aimed at the implementation of peace and disarmament measures, and with promoting economic and social development through an appropriate usage of available resources.

As a result of the support that the Regional Centre has provided, the States of the region have made progress in capacity-building, training, and the development and implementation of legislation in areas linked to disarmament and security.

Today, we wish to share with the Committee a number of the activities that were undertaken this year by the States of the region, working with the Regional Centre on matters related to peace, disarmament and development. This will serve not only to make Members aware of the joint efforts that have been developed within the region and by the Organization, but also to send out a call for strengthened international cooperation in working for peace and development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Over the past 12 months, the activities of the Regional Centre have focused on helping States of the region to respond to one of the gravest threats it faces — the trafficking and illicit use of firearms, munitions and explosives. The Centre has contributed to combating that scourge by assisting the countries of the region in the adoption of a harmonized regional approach to addressing this threat and adopting strict control measures for firearms.

With regard to work carried out in the subregion, I wish to underline the support that has been provided to the Caribbean States in improving their management of stocks of surplus firearms and munitions. In response to a request from the States of the Caribbean, the Regional Centre developed and implemented the assistance module for the destruction of firearms and the management of existing stocks in the Caribbean. The outcome will provide a basis for the national action plans of the beneficiary States.

These plans lay out short- and long-term strategies for capacity-building and for updating national legislation on firearms, and includes specific measures for enhancing the security of 35 arsenals and destroying the 50,000 firearms and more than 35,000 tons of munitions that have been identified among the recipient States.

Furthermore, in Central America the Centre also organized two inter-institutional national training courses to combat the illicit trade in firearms in Central America, which were attended by 120 law enforcement agents and legal officers, who participated in training sessions held in Panama in July 2010 and in Guatemala City in May 2011. We wish to underscore that the inter-institutional training course to combat the illicit trade in firearms, which was organized by the Regional Centre, received an award for best practices in the category of regional arms control at a meeting of the Central American Integration System.

In the Andean region, the Regional Centre organized inter-institutional training courses to combat the illicit trade in firearms in the four Andean countries over a four-month period. The first inter-institutional training course, which offered training to combat the illicit trade in firearms specifically for women working in this area, was convened in the Andean region. The course, held in Lima from 22 November to 3 December and attended by 37 female members of the law enforcement system, was aimed at enhancing their knowledge and understanding of various aspects of firearms control.

In other areas, the Regional Centre has actively supported the promotion of nuclear disarmament. A detailed presentation concerning the Secretary General's five-point proposal was held at a regional seminar on nuclear disarmament and on a nuclear-weapon-free world that was held in Montevideo, Uruguay, in November 2010. Furthermore, in cooperation with the Governments of the United States and Peru, the Regional Centre organized a regional workshop on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which was held in Lima in November 2010.

All these initiatives have been undertaken with scant resources, and it is therefore important to stress the important cooperation extended to the Regional Centre's activities by a number of States of the region; the Governments of Canada, Spain, the United States and Sweden; and such organizations as the Organization of American States (OAS), whose financial contributions were essential to allowing us to launch significant programmes and activities. The Regional Centre also benefited from the close cooperation and joint initiatives of other key partners in the region, such as the OAS, the United Nations Development Programme, the Central American Small Arms Control Programme, and the regional and national offices of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

We encourage States of the region and other Member States to redouble their efforts by making voluntary contributions that will allow the Centre to broaden the spectrum of its current activities. Those States that have made significant investments in the region should see these voluntary contributions not only as laudable efforts to attain peace and disarmament, but

also as a form of cooperation in the consolidation of security and institutional stability in the region, which in turn will be of benefit both to all countries of the region and to those investing in them.

Identifying those areas on which the Centre should focus its work is an essential task that will better orient the efforts and scant resources available to it. This difficult mission has been well undertaken by the various administrations that have led the Centre, and in particular by the current group responsible for the planning and implementation of the Regional Centre's activities here in New York and in Lima. We wish to offer them all our particular gratitude.

For the reasons previously outlined, my delegation once again has the honour to introduce the draft resolution entitled "United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean", contained in document A/C.1/66/L.16. The draft resolution reiterates firm support for the Centre's role in the promotion of United Nations regional activities to strengthen peace, stability, security and development. The region therefore trusts that, as has been the case in previous years, we will be able to count on the valuable support of all delegations so that the draft resolution can be adopted by consensus.

Mr. AlAdwani (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like from this rostrum to emphasize that the continued existence of nuclear weapons poses a threat to international peace and security and to all humankind. The disasters potentially caused by these deadly weapons could lead not only to the eruption of wars and tensions among nations, but could also transform many regions of the world into mass graves. To avoid such disasters, we call on Member States to pursue nuclear disarmament with greater interest in view of its vital benefits to international peace and security.

From this rostrum, I should like to convey my country's serious concern over the security perils and challenges at the regional and international levels, which spur our ongoing commitment and adherence to international legal instruments and relevant disarmament conventions, in particular the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which in turn is considered to be the basis for eradicating these deadly weapons.

Since the Middle East region is considered to be one of the most tense regions in the world, we all have to seek to free it of nuclear weapons in implementation of the resolution adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. We also have to take into consideration that all the States of the region are currently party to the NPT except Israel. It is the only country in the region that possesses nuclear weapons and persists in its refusal to join the Treaty and to subject its nuclear facilities to the comprehensive safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). My country therefore calls on the international community to bring pressure to bear on Israel to join the NPT and to subject all its nuclear facilities to the comprehensive safeguards regime of the IAEA, as reflected in the IAEA resolution on Israeli nuclear capabilities.

My delegation looks forward with great interest to the international conference scheduled to convene in 2012 on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. My delegation looks forward to the achievement of the goals of the conference, welcomes the appointment by the Secretary-General of Mr. Laajava as facilitator of the conference, and wishes him and his country, Finland, every success.

As regards the Iranian nuclear programme, the State of Kuwait is not geographically far from the location of the Iranian nuclear reactor and is concerned lest a nuclear leak occur as a result of natural causes. My country believes in the rights of States, including Iran, to conduct research on and produce nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination. However, such States need to cooperate with the IAEA and, through dialogue and cooperation, resolve issues that arise in order to further build confidence, which is important to assuring the countries of the region and the international community that the requirements of the IAEA and the resolutions of international legitimacy are being adhered to.

If cooperation with the IAEA is established, a stable environment will prevail in a region that has suffered over the past three decades from the depletion of its resources and its potential, which could have been used and directed towards the goals of development.

The Chair: I now give the floor to the representative of the Congo to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.23.

Mr. Balé (Congo) (*spoke in French*): It is my honour to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.23, entitled "Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on

Security Questions in Central Africa", on behalf of the 11 member States of the Committee: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe and my own country, the Congo.

Created in 1992 by the Secretary-General with a view to promoting arms control, disarmament, non-proliferation and development in the subregion of Central Africa, the Committee works to develop measures to enhance confidence and cooperation in the field of security among its member States.

Under its guidance, the countries of the subregion have concluded a non-aggression pact and a mutual assistance pact. In the same vein, they have created a mechanism to promote, maintain and build peace and security in Central Africa, known as the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa. At the initiative of the Committee, various subregional meetings have been held on themes covering issues linked to peace and security in Central Africa. Each of those meetings has offered an opportunity to the States members of the Committee to agree on relevant recommendations with a view to enhancing confidence, peace and security in the subregion.

The outcomes of the thirty-first and thirty-second ministerial meetings of the Standing Advisory Committee, which took place respectively in Brazzaville from 10 to 14 November 2010 and in Sao Tome from 9 to 13 March 2011, cemented the commitment of the member States to contributing more, individually and collectively, to that undertaking. While Brazzaville offered the States members of the Committee the framework for the signing of the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and All Parts and Components that can be used for their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly, known as the Kinshasa Convention, Sao Tome sealed their position on their support for negotiations on an arms trade treaty through the Central African Common Position on the Arms Trade Treaty.

It seems clear that the Standing Committee is a real springboard for promoting confidence, disarmament and arms limitation, both for its member States and for the Central African subregion as a whole. In addition to its primary objective, the Committee contributes to promoting stability and peace in our subregion. That is the core of the draft resolution that it is our honour to introduce today.

Draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.23 uses virtually the same terms as resolution 65/84, adopted by consensus last year. However, the desire to reflect the activities carried out by the Committee since the last session justifies the updates that members will have noted. These updates are contained in the fifth preambular paragraph and in a new preambular paragraph that does not appear in the text before the Committee. That new twelfth preambular paragraph on human security and in particular on human trafficking reads as follows:

(*spoke in English*)

> "Taking note with interest of the increasing focus of the Standing Advisory Committee on human security questions such as trafficking in persons, especially women and children, as an important consideration for subregional peace, stability and conflict prevention;"

(*spoke in French*)

I would propose that this preambular paragraph be submitted to the Secretariat and be integrated into the draft resolution only when it is ready for assessment.

The updating of other provisions cover the Declaration of Sao Tome, the signing at Brazzaville of the Kinshasa Convention, and issues related to transborder security threats, including the impact of the situation in Libya on the stability of the subregion, especially concerning the illicit trade and proliferation of weapons. Paragraphs 8 and 10 are devoted to the Kinshasa Convention and, inter alia, appeals to all 11 States members of Committee to ratify the Convention in a timely manner in order to facilitate its early entry into force and implementation. The draft resolution also appeals to the international community to support the efforts undertaken by the States concerned to implement disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes.

Under the draft, member States welcome the close cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of Central African States, on the one hand, and the States of the subregion on the other. The text reaffirms their support for efforts aimed at promoting confidence-building measures at the regional and subregional levels in order to ease tensions and conflicts in Central Africa and to further

sustainable peace, stability and development in the subregion.

The draft stresses furthermore the importance of disarmament and arms limitation programmes in Central Africa and of the promotion of peace, stability and sustainable development in that subregion.

In conclusion, I reiterate the thanks of the States of the subregion of Central Africa to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and to the Office of Disarmament Affairs for the significant assistance that they continue to provide to the Committee. I am particularly grateful to the Secretary-General for his support for the creation of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, and in that regard I voice my sincere appreciation to the Security Council for its unanimous support.

I should also like to take this opportunity to commend the unswerving commitment of the States members of the Committee and express my thanks to the countries and institutions that contribute to the Trust Fund of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. Thanks to that support, the Committee hopes to continue its activities on behalf of peace and security in Central Africa.

Finally, I should like to reiterate on behalf of the sponsors my gratitude to the members of the Committee for the unswerving support that they have given to the draft resolutions on the Committee's activities, and we call on them once again to reaffirm that solidarity by adopting draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.23 by consensus.

Mr. Alkaabi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): Despite the confidence-building measures adopted by the United Arab Emirates in the context of its disarmament efforts, the fact remains that the security climate in the Middle East continues to pose a serious threat to international peace, security and stability, given the Israeli Government's commitment to nuclear weapons in the region. The United Arab Emirates, which participated this year in a disarmament initiative reflecting its support for regional, international and multilateral efforts to establish a safe world free of nuclear weapons, reiterates its concern that Israel remains outside the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and thus is not required to submit its nuclear facilities to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards.

We affirm that the international failure to rectify this serious security imbalance in the region can only encourage Israel to pursue its irresponsible development of a dangerous nuclear arsenal, and other States in the region to try to acquire dangerous nuclear weapons on the basis of their own idea of deterrence in the field of security.

Therefore, we call once again for the international community to shoulder its political, legal and moral responsibilities for maintaining peace and security in the Middle East region by adopting constructive measures and approaches that can contribute to general and complete disarmament and to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, in line with the resolutions of international law, including the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and the recommendations contained in paragraphs 60 to 63 of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (resolution S-10/2).

In that context, we stress the need for the international community to exert additional political pressure on Israel to agree to calls for its urgent and unconditional accession to the NPT, like all the other States in the region, and to dismantle and subject its nuclear arsenal to the IAEA safeguards system. We also call on all States, in particular the nuclear-weapon States, to honour their commitments under all relevant international resolutions prohibiting technological, scientific and financial assistance in the development or improvement of the Israeli nuclear programme, which is not of a peaceful nature. In that regard, we support all international efforts to find a lasting, peaceful solution in the near future to the Iranian nuclear dossier, pursuant to the relevant international resolutions and the comprehensive IAEA safeguards.

The United Arab Emirates, convinced that these measures are vital to promoting confidence-building among the States of the region, looks forward to the success of the 2012 conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. We also welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General to reach a consensus on the work of that conference, that the designation of Finland as host of the conference, and the appointment of a Finnish facilitator to prepare it. In that regard, the United Arab Emirates will spare no effort to contribute

to the success of the upcoming conference with all the means at its disposal.

We hope that the conference will achieve its intended objectives ahead of the 2015 NPT Review Conference. We also hope that the facilitator will present a substantive report to the Preparatory Committee of the 2015 Conference and reaffirm the necessity for the Conference to meet the demands for progress towards the total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction in the region, including nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, while taking into account the requisite balance in terms of context and timing.

In conclusion, we hope that all delegations will approve and support the two draft resolutions before the Committee on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East (A/C.1/66/L.1) and the risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East (A/C.1/66/L.2). These texts reflect the genuine unanimity of the States of the region that are party to the NPT on the need for the Middle East region to be free of all weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons and their systems of delivery.

Mrs. Balaguer Labrada (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba reaffirms its firm commitment to multilateralism as a basic principle of negotiations in the field of disarmament and arms control, as well as the importance of regional and subregional initiatives in this area. Such measures can contribute to strengthening and enhancing peace and security at the regional and international levels with a view to devoting the resources that have been liberated as a result to socio-economic measures in order to combat poverty and to protect the environment for the benefit of all peoples.

In this regard, we reaffirm that regional disarmament efforts must duly take into account the specific features of each region. There can be no imposed solutions or measures that endanger the security of any country of the region concerned. Global and regional approaches, as well as confidence-building measures, are mutually complementary and should to the greatest extent possible be applied simultaneously in order to promote peace and stability at the regional and international levels.

By promoting bilateral and regional confidence-building measures based on the consent and participation of all interested parties, we will be able to avoid conflicts and prevent the accidental outbreak of hostilities. That in turn can help to alleviate tensions and contribute to regional security. States with greater military capacity bear a particular responsibility for regional and international security. In this context, one significant element is respect and support for regional and subregional decisions and treaties aimed at achieving peace and security.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones in various areas of the planet are an effective contribution to maintaining international peace and security and must therefore be respected.

To conclude, allow me to reaffirm that United Nations activities at the regional level that are aimed at enhancing stability and security among Member States should be substantively promoted through the maintenance and revitalization of the Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament.

The Chair: I now give the floor to the representative of Nepal who will introduce draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.34.

Mr. Rai (Nepal): On behalf of the sponsoring countries, my delegation has the honour to introduce, under agenda item 99 (e), a draft resolution entitled "United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific", contained in document A/C.1/66/L.34.

The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific was established by General Assembly resolution 42/39 D of November 1987, with headquarters in Kathmandu. The mandate of the Regional Centre is to provide, on request, substantive support for initiatives and other activities mutually agreed upon by Member States in the Asia-Pacific region for the implementation of measures pertaining to peace and disarmament.

The Regional Centre operated from New York for almost two decades until it was finally relocated to Kathmandu in 2008. With this relocation, the United Nations Regional Centre is in a better position to work closely with Member States from the Asia and Pacific region in the field of peace and disarmament. The Regional Centre serves as a common forum to assess the progress achieved in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation, and to discuss the way forward. As the host country to the Regional Centre, Nepal pledges its commitment to providing full support to the Regional Centre to make it an effective and primary United

Nations regional entity dealing with disarmament and non-proliferation issues in the Asia and Pacific region.

The promotion of regional peace and disarmament contributes to global peace and disarmament. Sustained consultation, dialogue and the sharing of good practices among Member States in the region are important steps in building a positive environment for peace, stability, disarmament and non-proliferation. As the principal United Nations regional entity addressing disarmament and non-proliferation issues in the Asia-Pacific region, the Centre can play a vital role towards that end by providing a shared platform for Member States.

It is our conviction that global and regional initiatives on peace, disarmament and non-proliferation should work in tandem. Confidence-building at all levels is critical to peace and disarmament. Regular dialogue and the exchange of views help to restore confidence and create an environment conducive to further progress on peace and disarmament.

It is our belief that the potential of the United Nations Regional Centre could be fully utilized to promote regional understanding and cooperation in the field of peace, disarmament and non-proliferation, with the active engagement of all Member States. In that conviction, my delegation has the honour to introduce, on behalf of the sponsors, draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.34, entitled "United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific" to the Committee. As with similar texts of previous years, the draft resolution aims to promote an effective and sustained role for the Centre in promoting peace, disarmament and security in the region. My delegation is confident that, as with analogous texts of the past, the Committee will adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

Mr. Nazarian (Armenia): At the outset, I should like to express my sympathy to the people of Turkey in connection with the earthquake that caused the loss of hundreds of innocent lives yesterday.

Since this is the first time I have taken the floor in this debate allow me to extend to you, Sir, our congratulations on your assumption of your very important post, as well as other members of the Bureau.

Armenia considers arms control and disarmament to be an integral part of the global and regional security architecture, supports the activities of the United Nations in the sphere of stability and confidence-building, and makes every effort to advance cooperation and strengthen confidence in the South Caucasus by utilizing the corresponding formats and mechanisms within the framework of international and regional organizations. This debate is a good opportunity to examine and identify the current challenges in this sphere, have an exchange of views and ideas, and seek measures aimed at strengthening regional security and further promoting the disarmament processes.

This year again, Armenia will co-sponsor the draft resolution on transparency in armaments (A/C.1/66/L.29). We strongly support the arms trade treaty process and are convinced that adopting a well-balanced, non-discriminatory and comprehensive legally binding instrument will be an important step towards the establishment of effective mechanisms to control the import, export and transfer of conventional weapons. In this regard, we would like to join other delegations in commending Ambassador García Moritán's able leadership of the arms trade treaty Preparatory Committee.

The Republic of Armenia is very supportive of the earliest possible resumption of work at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. We need to show collective political will to make it happen. The adoption 10 years ago of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects was an important milestone. As the only global instrument in this field, it reflects the shared understanding of the common responsibility and commitment to stopping the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which has become a fuelling agent in many conflicts throughout the world, causing grave human suffering and posing a threat to the security and stability of many regions.

Armenia is committed to the effective implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action. Like many other delegations, it has great expectations for the forthcoming second Review Conference and hopes that the spirit of cooperation and readiness will prevail and achieve success.

We will continue our close cooperation with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs on issues related to the arms control regime. Armenia regularly submits annual information on international transfers in the categories of conventional arms, as well as small arms and light weapons, and remains actively engaged in information exchange, pursuant to relevant

General Assembly resolutions. We have submitted our report on confidence-building measures in the regional and subregional context, pursuant to resolution 65/47, as reflected in the statement and tables presented by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs last week (see A/C.1/66/PV.10).

Armenia underlines the significance of regional arms control and disarmament regimes, which promote regional security and stability and play a crucial role in conflict prevention and management. In this regard, we would like to highlight the legally binding Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) as the main mechanism for the control of disarmament processes in the European region, as well as the cornerstone of confidence-building measures. The full and unconditional implementation of the Treaty is a vital factor for the security of the European region in general and the South Caucasus in particular.

Today, Azerbaijan remains the only State party to the CFE that is in deliberate breach of one of the key principles of the Treaty: limitations. According to official information on implementation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, as of 1 January 2011 Azerbaijan had significantly exceeded its established ceilings in two categories of Treaty-limited equipment, namely, battle tanks and artillery. In 2011, there have been sizeable purchases of additional Treaty-limited equipment, including artillery pieces and armament combat vehicles. Thus, Azerbaijan exceeds its established limits in the third category as well.

Unfortunately, the ill-perceived political motivations of Azerbaijan do not allow the taking of practical steps in the field of regional security and disarmament. On the contrary, the Azerbaijani side has initiated an extremely dangerous arms race at the subregional level, openly demonstrating its readiness to use force in order to achieve its political objectives.

In its previous statements, my delegation has spoken about an imminent arms race in the South Caucasus. Today, I have to state that, unfortunately, the armaments race in our neighbourhood has already become a reality. We believe that, in order to avoid further escalation and a deterioration of the security situation in the region, the international community should react to this explicit breach of international norms and take all necessary steps to halt the unfolding arms initiated by Azerbaijan. The manifold increase of Azerbaijan's military budget over the past year and the persistent aggressive rhetoric of the Azerbaijani leaders have also had a highly negative impact on regional security and stability and seriously undermined the processes of the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

After all, aspiring to membership in the Security Council with such behaviour and in such manner is impermissible and even dangerous.

To ease existing tensions in the region, to reverse the worrisome trends and to fill the security vacuum, Armenia and Georgia have also recently taken responsible steps to advance bilateral cooperation in the field of defence. It is hoped this positive development will influence the other stakeholders in the region to get on the same road. Armenia has always stressed its readiness for open and constructive dialogue, which would enable the sides to create an atmosphere of trust and cooperation and would ease tensions in the region, making it possible to progress in the settlement of extremely serious problems in their bilateral and regional relations.

Armenia believes in the viability and efficiency of the United Nations in enhancing trust, building confidence and promoting regional dialogue. Full compliance with the United Nations resolutions on regional arrangements on arms control and disarmament is one of the most essential and critical factors that can bring us closer to stability and durable peace not only in the South Caucasus but well beyond.

Mr. Aung Lwin (Myanmar): It is my pleasure to participate in the thematic discussion on regional disarmament and security. We listened attentively to the panel discussions the other day, led by the Chief of the Regional Disarmament Branch of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, and the Directors of the Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, and the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, providing comprehensive overviews of their respective responsibilities. We are grateful for their insight.

Myanmar supports the revitalization of the Regional Centres and the important role that the Centres are playing in promoting confidence-building and arms limitation measures at the regional level, thereby promoting durable peace and sustainable development in the regions concerned.

As part of the world disarmament campaign, the General Assembly has established three Regional Centres, one each for Africa, Latin America and Asia and the Pacific. We firmly believe that the active role being played by the Regional Centres in the promotion of peace and security in their respective regions provides us with an opportunity to enhance the maintenance of international peace and security.

In this conviction, my delegation is a co-sponsor of the draft resolution on the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (A/C.1/66/L.34). We have also lent our support to the resolutions on the Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean and the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa in previous years. We will continue to do so this time around.

We are of the view that the workshops, seminars and other regional interactive dialogue organized by the Regional Centres play an important role in disseminating and sharing the concepts, ideas and action plans discussed in the First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament and other international disarmament forums. In this context, the role of the Office for Disarmament Affairs is also crucial to organizing, compiling and distributing the papers and to other disarmament-related issues. We commend the website that the Office for Disarmament Affairs established as a valuable resource for experts and laymen in different countries.

Voluntary budgetary contributions from States Members of the United Nations and other interested organizations and individuals will continue to be needed to meet the staffing requirements and basic administrative costs of the Regional Centres. In this vein, we would welcome any initiatives of Member States and interested organizations and individuals to provide further necessary funding for the sustainability of the Regional Centres.

Mr. Ahidjo (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time that my delegation has taken the floor, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, and the members of the Bureau on your election to the helm of our Committee.

I am honoured to take the floor under agenda item 99 (f), concerning regional confidence-building measures and the activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa.

Upon its establishment in 1992, the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa was mandated to develop, adopt and implement specific confidence-building measures for the subregion of Central Africa. These measures were adopted. Allow me to specify a number of such measures: the negotiation of the non-aggression pact among the Central African States of July 1999; the creation of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa in February 1999, the three pillars of which are the Defence and Security Commission, the Central Africa Multilateral Force and the Central African Early Warning System, which constitute the subregional segment of the continental security structure; the adoption of the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components that can be used for their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly, known as the Kinshasa Convention, which, following the thirty-first ministerial meeting of the Standing Committee in November 2010 in Brazzaville, was signed by member States and is in the process of ratification; and the adoption of the Sao Tome Declaration on the Central African Common Position on the Arms Trade Treaty, work on which is to begin in 2012 under United Nations auspices.

In addition to these measures are the consideration and adoption of the Implementation Plan for the Kinshasa Convention, the aim of which is to enable the various actors concerned — the States members of the Committee, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the United Nations as the depositary — to take stock of their respective areas of responsibility with regard to the Kinshasa Convention. Furthermore, the principle of rotating the sessions of the ministerial meetings of the Standing Advisory Committee among the capitals of the subregion has enabled ministers and experts accompanying them to forge personal links that are a prerequisite for forging confidence among the Governments and peoples of Central Africa. The Standing Advisory Committee should therefore continue to convene these ministerial meetings and to organize thematic debates on the main security issues of our times.

In this regard, it is crucial that the important activities of the Standing Advisory Committee not be hampered by budgetary constraints that could jeopardize a comprehensive strategy, the aim of which is to maintain and cultivate peace and security in

Central Africa. What is more, greater contributions to the Trust Fund of the Standing Advisory Committee are necessary to ensuring the sustainability of its activities.

Moreover, we take this opportunity to reiterate Cameroon's proposal to host, under the auspices of the ECCAS and with the support of our bilateral and multilateral partners, an international conference on maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. The aim is to help the States of the subregion to identify measures to combat the pirates who have wrought havoc on that part of the African continent and whose actions are harmful not only to the circulation of goods and people but also to the economic development and well-being to which our peoples aspire. The organization of that conference could constitute the expression of a strengthened partnership between the Standing Advisory Committee and the Economic Community of Central African States. Strengthening this partnership, we believe, is a sine qua non condition for the enhanced efficacy of the Standing Advisory Committee.

My country commends the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa for the support and assistance it provided to the actions of the Standing Advisory Committee during its thirty-first and thirty-second ministerial meetings. In the same vein, Cameroon welcomes the effective inauguration of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and the appointment of its Director. The launching of the Office's activities is of pressing importance in a region where every effort must be undertaken to strengthen peace, security and stability, as well as socio-economic development. Our Government hopes that the General Assembly will continue to provide the subregional Office with the resources necessary to fulfil its task.

Mr. Strohal (Austria): Let me briefly join others in commending the work of the Regional Disarmament Branch of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. We are generally appreciative of the efforts undertaken by the Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament and wish especially to commend the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa for the work it continues to carry out.

My Government is pleased with the effective execution of the following three projects which we have been funding: the elaboration of the guide on the harmonization of national legislations in West Africa; the regulation of brokering in small arms and light weapons in Eastern Africa; and, finally, the elaboration of the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly.

Last Friday my country hosted a side event at our Mission to promote the Kinshasa Convention, and I should like to take this opportunity to thank all participants for their contribution to very interesting discussions. We also want to congratulate the States parties to the Kinshasa Convention on the swift elaboration of that cutting-edge legal instrument and are looking forward to its early entry into force. We hope that the Regional Centre will continue to assist the States of Central Africa in the implementation of that instrument.

Mr. Najafi (Islamic Republic of Iran): First, I should like to associate myself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/C.1/66/PV.18).

The Islamic Republic of Iran considers nuclear disarmament to be the highest priority in the field of disarmament, and the total elimination of nuclear weapons to be the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, and accordingly supports all genuine international efforts towards the realization of that noble objective.

In this context, we believe that an effective measure towards realizing a world free from nuclear weapons is the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and ensuring that such zones are genuinely free of nuclear weapons pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, with all nuclear-weapon States legally committed to accord unconditional, permanent negative security assurances to all the States of such regions.

For that reason, the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East remains a strategic approach of my country in promoting peace, security and stability in that volatile region. Indeed, Iran was the first to initiate discussion of the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East in 1974 and, on the basis of that initiative, the General Assembly has every year since then adopted by consensus a resolution on the establishment of such a zone in the Middle East.

Likewise, the consensus Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I) in 1978 reaffirmed that

> "[t]he establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East would greatly enhance international peace and security. Pending the establishment of such a zone in the region, States of the region should solemnly declare that they will refrain on a reciprocal basis from producing, acquiring or in any other way possessing nuclear weapons and nuclear explosive devices and from permitting the stationing of nuclear weapons on their territory by any third party, and agree to place all their nuclear activities under International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards" (*resolution S-10/2, para. 63 (d)*).

In our view, the reaffirmation of the importance of this initiative in the Final Document of SSOD-I and the uninterrupted adoption by the General Assembly of annual resolutions on this subject over the past 37 years are manifestations of global support for the promotion of peace, security and stability in the Middle East through the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone therein.

However, it is a source of grave concern and disappointment that, despite all these efforts and the repeated calls of the international community — reflected in the resolutions of the General Assembly, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Review Conferences of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as well as the final documents of successive summits of the Non-Aligned Movement — the Zionist regime, which is the only non-NPT party in the region and is confident of the full support of its big patron the United States, has neither acceded to the NPT nor placed its unsafeguarded nuclear facilities under the full-scope safeguards of the IAEA. Consequently, no progress has been made so far in the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

While that regime, by developing and possessing all types of weapons of mass destruction and pursuant to the explicit acknowledgement by its high officials of its possession of nuclear weapons, is the only source of threat and the only obstacle to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, we stress that peace and stability cannot be achieved in the Middle East inasmuch as such an irresponsible regime is outside the NPT and its nuclear arsenal continues to threaten peace in the region and beyond.

The Zionist regime's history is replete with aggression and threats against countries of the region. The 33-day war with Lebanon and the 22-day barbaric attack on Gaza using unlawful weapons are just two recent examples of that regime's atrocities. Such measures prove how nuclear weapons in the hands of such an irresponsible regime can endanger regional as well as international peace and security.

As the initiator of the drive to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, Iran has spared no effort in supporting meaningful steps aimed at making progress towards the establishment of such a zone. In this connection, in addition to the NPT, Iran has ratified and fully implemented other major treaties banning weapons of mass destruction, including 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.

The immediate, full and unconditional implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East — an essential element on the basis of which the NPT was indefinitely extended in 1995 — is of great importance to us. In this regard, we underline the confirmation by the 2010 NPT Review Conference that "the resolution remains valid until its goals and objectives are achieved" (NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vol.I)/ IV.1). Based on this principled position, the Islamic Republic of Iran actively participated in the 2010 NPT Review Conference and fully supported its consensus conclusions and recommendations for follow-on actions, which include, inter alia, measures for the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East.

With reference to the implementation of measures related to the 1995 resolution on the Middle East contained in the follow-up actions of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, the Islamic Republic of Iran is of the firm belief that an agreed plan of action and timetable for achieving the universality of the NPT in the Middle East should be the only top priority at the 2012 conference on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

As at the 2010 NPT Review Conference the States parties to the Treaty renewed their resolve to undertake, individually or collectively, all necessary

measures aimed at the prompt implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, we firmly believe that at the 2012 conference on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East strong pressure should be exerted on the Zionist regime by all parties to the Treaty, in particular the nuclear-weapon States, to eliminate all its nuclear weapons, accede to the NPT without further delay and without condition as a non-nuclear-weapon party, and place all its nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguards in order to pave the way for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

In conclusion, I should like to reiterate that the appointment by the Secretary-General of the facilitator and the designation of the host country for the 2012 conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction are only two steps at the beginning of an extremely tortuous path. As the convening of such a conference was decided by the States parties to the NPT at its 2010 Review Conference and the facilitator should report only to the 2015 NPT Review Conference and the meetings of its Preparatory Committee, the 2012 conference should be considered as a subsidiary forum of the NPT Review Conference. Its convening was not a decision of the United Nations or the International Atomic Energy Agency. Consequently, all the rules applicable to the NPT Review Conference should be applied to the 2012 conference, and the basis of any decision must be the decisions already taken consensually by the States parties to the NPT at its Review Conferences.

The Chair: We have now heard all the speakers on cluster 6, "Regional disarmament and security".

We will now hear speakers on the list for cluster 7, "Disarmament machinery", who wish to make statements or introduce draft resolutions under that cluster. Once again I ask delegations to keep their statements brief and to the point as we have 27 speakers on the list.

Mr. Hermoso (Philippines): In the interests of time, I shall read an abbreviated version of my statement. The Philippines reaffirms its belief that multilateral diplomacy is the best way to make further progress in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In this regard, there must be a fully functioning disarmament machinery with a negotiating body that should be working intensively, and if need be on a daily basis, towards a nuclear-weapon-free world. The Conference on Disarmament (CD) is a part of this machinery, and in this regard my delegation wishes to make the following points.

With regard to the advocacy of the CD informal group of observer States to bring attention to the question of membership in the Conference, the Philippines regards this question as a matter of principle. If the CD functions on the basis of the sovereign equality of States, then those member States that wish to participate fully in the work of the body should be given the opportunity to do so.

Secondly, in the interests of promoting greater inclusivity and dynamism in the CD, the Philippines calls for a review of the membership of the Conference as stipulated in its rules of procedure and to allow for the expansion of its membership. Numerous countries, at present observers in the CD, possess the legitimate aspiration to full membership in the Conference. To facilitate this review, the Philippines calls for the appointment by the Conference on Disarmament of a special rapporteur or coordinator on enlargement.

Thirdly, given the situation in the CD and the need to make a holistic diagnosis of the global disarmament architecture with nations from a broad spectrum of the United Nations membership, both North and South, voicing concerns over the status quo in the disarmament milieu, with some even prepared to take extraordinary measures including abandoning the CD, the Philippines urges CD members to overcome outstanding differences regarding the implementation of a programme of work, but, should they fail to do so within a specified period of time, sees no option but to find alternative means to take forward multilateral disarmament negotiations. It is not just the disarmament process that is called into question; the multilateral process as a whole is at stake.

The Philippines also feels that States must desist from venturing into activities that have proven time and time again to be ineffectual. There are other bodies in the disarmament machinery aside from the Conference on Disarmament that cannot function or come up with substantive results and/or recommendations.

Given the difficult economic situation countries are faced with and the limited resources now available, such resources would be better spent for more productive endeavours, such as disarmament education. In this regard, the Philippines wishes to emphasize the importance of enhancing disarmament education and the

related need to increase support for the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. The Philippines sees disarmament education programmes as a way to ensure that the next generation of disarmament leaders will be ready to take on the responsibility of pushing through agreements we are unable to reach today.

Furthermore, as a confidence-building measure the Philippines recalls action 22 of the Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (resolution S-10/2), which encourages States to implement the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General regarding the United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education.

The Philippines also wishes to recall another very important agreement, as included in the consensus Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference. I refer to action 21, which calls for a standard reporting form to determine appropriate reporting intervals for the purpose of voluntarily providing standard information without prejudice to national security. This reporting is important to the multilateral disarmament process.

In closing, the Philippines also wishes to recognize the contribution that civil society can and has made to the multilateral disarmament process.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): In the interests of time, I too shall read an abridged version of my speech. The full text is being distributed in the Committee.

The United Nations disarmament machinery as we know it was created by the General Assembly at its first special session devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I) 33 years ago. The critical requirement set forth by SSOD-I in the context of disarmament machinery is that

> "[t]he adoption of disarmament measures should take place in such an equitable and balanced manner as to ensure the right of each State to security and to ensure that no individual State or group of States may obtain advantages over others at any stage" (*resolution S-10/2, para. 29*).

In the past two years, we have heard repeatedly that the machinery created in 1978 has perhaps been unable to create an environment conducive to norm-building, deliberations and negotiations on disarmament subjects; hence the growing mantra for revitalizing the international disarmament machinery and the convening of two high-level meetings to promote that goal.

That machinery, of which the Conference on Disarmament (CD) and the United Nations Disarmament Commission are important parts, is seen by some States to have failed the purposes for which they were created. The description of the state of this machinery and the diagnosis of its ailment are partial and focus almost exclusively on symptoms rather than causes.

The primary purpose of creating the CD was nuclear disarmament — an agenda item on which no progress has been allowed by some major Powers for the past 32 years. The leading critics of the CD are themselves responsible for dragging their feet on the most important issues of nuclear disarmament: negative security assurances and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. These countries have also played a major role in ensuring the CD's inactivity for decades and stalled deliberations in the Disarmament Commission. Their self-righteous concerns are limited to progress on a single issue in the CD, with no interest in the other three core issues on its agenda.

In 2008, the Secretary-General, articulating his five-point disarmament proposals, accorded primacy to nuclear disarmament. The reason the Secretary-General made that call is the fact that the CD has not been able to live up to its raison d'être — nuclear disarmament — for more than three decades. It is also a fact that the CD has failed to make any substantive progress for 15 years after concluding the negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Yet it is surprising to note that the present calls for revitalization of the CD selectively project developments of the past two years only by fixating on a single issue.

In order objectively to evaluate the causes underlying the impasse in the CD, it is important to acknowledge the following basic facts. The CD's work or inactivity is a reflection of prevailing political realities, as the CD does not operate in a vacuum. No treaty can be negotiated in the CD that is contrary to the security interests of any of its member States. In fact, the rule of consensus was introduced to the CD's rules of procedure to ensure this point. Hence, making progress in the CD is possible only by meeting or addressing the security concerns of all CD member States.

The CD's lack of progress cannot be attributed to its rules of procedure, since landmark instruments such as

the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and the CTBT were negotiated successfully with the same rules in the CD.

These facts signify that the problems faced by the CD are not of an organizational or procedural nature. It is therefore time for us to face the reality and recognize the true reasons due to which the Conference on Disarmament has become dysfunctional. The CD's history clearly demonstrates a pattern of negotiating only those agreements that do not undermine or compromise the security interests of powerful States.

The same model and approach are being pursued in the case of the fissile material cut-off treaty. Now, after having developed huge stockpiles of nuclear weapons as well as stocks of fissile material, especially highly enriched uranium and weapons-grade plutonium, which can be quickly converted into nuclear warheads, the major Powers are ready to conclude a treaty that will only ban future production of fissile material since they no longer need more of it. That approach is cost-free for them, as it will not undermine or compromise their security. It is for that reason that they are not ready to include the issue of stockpiles of existing fissile material in a fissile material treaty.

Moreover, in the past few years, the discriminatory nuclear cooperation policies pursued by some major Powers have created insecurity and imbalances, especially in our region. Those policies, by undermining international non-proliferation norms in pursuit of power and profit, have accentuated the asymmetry in fissile material stocks in South Asia. Regrettably, those discriminatory policies continue, and have found no opposition among the member countries of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, comprised of some of the most ardent supporters of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the strongest critics of the so-called lack of progress in the CD.

It is for those reasons that Pakistan has been obliged to take a stand against nuclear selectivity, discrimination and exceptionalism. No country can be expected to compromise on its fundamental security interests for an instrument that is cost-free for all other countries concerned.

The challenges faced by the international disarmament agenda and machinery go beyond the CD. The components of contemporary disarmament machinery are interlinked. Other parts of that machinery, such as the Disarmament Commission and the First Committee, have done as well or as badly as the CD. The DC has not been able to evolve an agreed document for more than a decade and a half. The draft resolutions adopted by the First Committee have also not found any traction politically for several years. Why then single out the CD for its inactivity? The revitalization of those components, including the First Committee and the Disarmament Commission, should therefore be simultaneous and proceed in an integrated and holistic manner. In our view, the following steps and measures would need to be taken.

First, the agenda of the CD covers a number of critical issues. All issues need to be treated in an equal and balanced manner. The lack of progress on one issue due to security concerns of States should not lead to an impasse in the CD, as other issues on its agenda can, and should be, taken up for consideration and negotiation.

Second, nuclear disarmament remains the longest outstanding issue on the CD's agenda. The 120-member Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which represents the overwhelming majority in the United Nations, has consistently deemed nuclear disarmament as the highest priority for negotiations in the CD.

Third, the proposal for a legal instrument on negative security assurances is another important issue that has been on the agenda of the CD for several years. A legally binding instrument on negative security assurances would not compromise the strategic interests of any country. In reality, no nuclear-weapon State would consider using nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. Even the threat of doing so is morally reprehensible.

Fourth, we need to recognize the realities and work towards building consensus in the CD by taking into account the legitimate security interests of all States.

Fifth, the CD cannot negotiate by cherry-picking issues that some States consider to be ripe.

Sixth, the nuclear-weapon States need to fulfil their obligations to undertake negotiations on effective measures leading to nuclear disarmament in the CD.

Seventh, double standards and selectivity will have to be eliminated in nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament measures.

Eighth, beyond reform and rationalization of the working methods, the normative and deliberative

roles and functions of the First Committee and the Disarmament Commission need to be revitalized.

Pakistan strongly believes in the need for preserving all the components of the disarmament machinery that have been developed by consensus. Any effort to bypass or weaken that machinery would undermine consensus and legitimacy. Pakistan would never be part of any such efforts. Instead of selective and partial solutions aimed at strengthening the disarmament machinery, Pakistan calls for evolving a new and balanced consensus to deal with the present stalemate in the mechanisms and modalities for promoting global peace and security, as well as in advancing disarmament negotiations.

In that regard, Pakistan fully supports the long-standing call by NAM countries, which comprise almost two thirds of the United Nations membership, to convene the fourth special session devoted to disarmament. The session would contribute positively to finding ways to achieve the goals of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in a balanced and non-discriminatory manner, keeping in view the security interests of all States.

Mr. van den IJssel (Netherlands): It is regrettable that for more than a decade the multilateral disarmament machinery, and the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in particular, has not met the expectations of the international community. The CD is failing to fulfil its mandate. It is failing to address the pressing security challenges facing the international community by producing effective multilateral arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation instruments through negotiations.

The Netherlands finds the stalemate in the CD unacceptable. We urgently need to revitalize the work of the CD. We urgently need to take forward multilateral disarmament negotiations. In that regard, we highly appreciate the Secretary-General's initiatives in support of such efforts. The high-level meeting of September 2010 and the follow-up debate last July highlighted the variety of views States have on the causes of the stalemate in the CD. But above all, the high-level meeting made it clear that we need to move beyond mere deliberations and proceed to action without any further delay.

In New York, the Disarmament Commission regrettably once again has failed to produce any concrete recommendations. We consider that to be an additional indicator of the continued challenges facing the wider multilateral disarmament machinery.

If the multilateral disarmament machinery, especially the CD, is not able to overcome that crisis, the international community, and the First Committee in particular, will need to respond and give serious consideration to ways and means to overcome it. States are already discussing various options. Some options focus on giving the General Assembly a more central and active role. Others focus on implementing agreements previously reached in the CD and other relevant multilateral forums. And there are those that seek to intensify preparations for negotiations or seek to include a broader reform process of the machinery. Although those options are all somehow different, they have something in common. They all aim at improving global security, including through moving towards a world without nuclear weapons.

It is in that context that the Netherlands, together with South Africa and Switzerland, has introduced a draft resolution on revitalizing the disarmament machinery and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations. The draft resolution aims at consensus, at uniting all States Members of the United Nations around the need to revitalize the work of the Conference on Disarmament and at taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations. The draft resolution encourages States to build on the work that has already been undertaken and to explore, consider and consolidate options, proposals and elements for the revitalization of the United Nations disarmament machinery, including the CD.

The draft resolution also recognizes the need to take stock, during this session of the General Assembly, of all the relevant efforts in order to be well prepared for the sixty-seventh session. We need to make sure that if the CD fails again, next year we do not find ourselves in the same place as this year, but that we have a basis to consider alternative options. I should like to underline that should we fail to make substantive progress, in the view of the Netherlands, all options should be up for discussion.

Ms. Sequensová (Czech Republic): The Czech Republic strongly supports the strengthening and revitalization of the entire United Nations disarmament machinery, including the General Assembly and the First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament (CD) and the Disarmament Commission.

The First Committee is an important body where discussions on current topics and initiatives on non-proliferation and disarmament issues take place. The First Committee should improve its working methods in order better to respond to contemporary security challenges and to develop concrete measures to address them.

Similarly, the working methods and procedures of the Disarmament Commission should be reviewed. The aim of the Commission should be to submit recommendations on disarmament and arms control issues to the General Assembly, and through it to the Conference on Disarmament.

The CD is the body with the crucial role of negotiating multilateral treaties. After more than 10 years of stalemate, the CD needs to resume its work. Next year will be crucial for the Conference in proving its credibility, effectiveness and relevance. The Czech Republic fully supports the statement delivered in the General Assembly in July by the observer of the European Union in the debate on revitalizing the work of the CD, as well as the concrete proposals set out with regard to the CD. We call on all CD members to adopt a programme of work without delay and, subsequently, to start negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty and begin work on the other issues on the agenda.

As an active member of the informal group of observer States to the CD, the Czech Republic considers the question of expanding the membership of the CD to be a very important one. While we support the need for the CD to begin substantive work at the earliest opportunity, we ask for parallel consideration of the membership issue. Although the rules of procedure require a regular revision of the membership, the last revision and expansion of the membership occurred 12 years ago. The CD should become more open. The universal impact of any new legal instrument can only be meaningful when its negotiating process upholds the principles of transparency and inclusiveness. In that regard, we call for the early appointment of a special rapporteur to review the issue of CD membership. Such an appointment should be seen as a way of beginning discussions on this important issue. It would not prejudge any particular outcome.

The Chair: I now give the floor to the representative of Austria to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.21.

Mr. Strohal (Austria): Revitalizing the international disarmament machinery is imperative. I should like briefly to outline some elements of our thinking and, more important, the initiative we have been undertaking, together with Mexico and Norway.

In addressing the General Assembly on 24 September, my Minister announced that Austria would promote a draft resolution on how to move forward multilateral disarmament negotiations. This draft resolution is the third in a row introduced by my delegation in the First Committee since the adoption of the work programme (see CD/1864) by the Conference on Disarmament (CD).

In 2009, as President of the CD, I introduced and negotiated resolution 64/64, on the report of the CD, which welcomed the consensus adoption of a programme of work. That programme of work remains for most of us the gold standard for a balanced and comprehensive programme, but its non-implementation also demonstrates the inability of the CD to fulfil its mandate as set out by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I), that is, the actual negotiation of disarmament treaties.

Last year, following the high-level meeting convened by the Secretary-General, my delegation introduced and negotiated resolution 65/93, on revitalizing the CD and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations. The debate held by the General Assembly on this issue last July clearly demonstrated the overwhelming sense of urgency to overcome the current stalemate in international disarmament machinery, but it did not result in concrete proposals how to tackle this challenge.

This year, together with Mexico and Norway, we therefore submitted draft resolution A/C.1/66/L.21, entitled “Taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations”, which contains a concrete proposal to be considered by the General Assembly at its session next year. Before introducing the draft resolution in more detail, let me briefly mention our general approach.

Like others, we agree that the CD is the designated multilateral forum for disarmament negotiations. I may recall that Austria was one of the six Presidents when decision CD/1864 was negotiated. We particularly endeavoured to make the programme of work as balanced as possible, taking account of the different priorities attributed to various items on the agenda. We will continue to do our utmost to contribute to breaking the stalemate in the CD.

However, since joining the CD, Austria has never seen one day of substantive negotiations there. After one and a half decades of paralysis, it is becoming increasingly clear that the CD may be unable to live up to its mandate as agreed upon at SSOD-I.

In that context, let me emphasize that SSOD-I mandated the CD to negotiate disarmament treaties, not to prevent the negotiation of such treaties. However, unfortunately, that is how the CD appears today. Many analyses have been made with regard to the current impasse. Let me try to change the narrative from what we are being told to what we hear. We are being told that the lack of political will prevents the CD from fulfilling its core task, namely, negotiating disarmament treaties. What we hear, however, is an abundance of political will by a vast majority to negotiate.

We are being told that the consensus rule is indispensable to protect the security interests of a few members of the CD. What we hear, however, is that the consensus rule should not serve to prevent the beginning of negotiations. Needless to say, the decision about acceding to any legal instrument emerging from such negotiations is the sovereign right of each and every State, irrespective of it being a member of the CD or of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons or both.

We are also being told that security interests are at stake, as if the negotiation of disarmament treaties were a threat. It is particularly odd that this argument is used by States with nuclear weapons in their arsenals. What we hear, however, is that the negotiation of disarmament treaties increases the security of the international community at large, especially of the vast majority of States not possessing nuclear weapons.

Also, in our view, the continued paralysis with respect to multilateral disarmament negotiations must be overcome urgently. Fresh and innovative approaches therefore need to be considered on how progress on substance may be achievable. That may require breaking with some of the dogmas, getting out of the box, as well as a greater readiness to compromise.

Let me therefore briefly introduce our draft resolution, which is an attempt to encourage such innovative thinking. The draft resolution is by no means an attempt to undermine the CD. Our track record during recent years is evidence enough of our commitment to the start of disarmament negotiations within the CD. Our proposal outlines an idea for establishing open-ended working groups in Geneva on all issues currently blocked in the CD, for the duration of the paralysis of the CD.

Its main focus is to stimulate a shift from our discussions on procedural issues, such as a programme of work for the CD, to substantive disarmament negotiations. It maintains a careful balance among different priority issues, which, in our view, is necessary to garner broad support for any breakthrough on substance. In that context, let me highlight that all three issues, including a fissile material cut-off treaty, are nuclear disarmament issues. That is why we have put them under a broad nuclear disarmament chapeau.

The draft resolution does not foresee any operational decision being taken at this stage. Rather, it suggests giving serious consideration to this proposal at next year's session of the General Assembly, should the CD remain in paralysis. We will have to devote all our efforts next year to bring the CD back to work. However, if such a breakthrough continues to elude us, my country is convinced that new approaches must be seriously considered.

We see our proposal as a contribution to launching a broader discussion, and are open to all other innovative proposals that would help us to move towards substantive disarmament negotiations. Our draft resolution is a constructive contribution. We have already achieved one goal, that is, to stimulate our debate and the dynamics necessary to revitalize the disarmament machinery.

We realize that some delegations are at this stage sceptical of the ideas that we have outlined. We are therefore continuing to consult broadly and in a transparent manner. We have listened very carefully to all comments made, especially during the two rounds of informal consultations held last week. I would like to thank delegations for their contributions. As a consequence, we have adapted the text somewhat and have prepared a revision of the draft resolution, which will be circulated.

We appreciate the broad range of comments. Comments certainly facilitate our collective goal of substantially taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations. It is with that approach in mind that we are asking all delegations to examine our proposal on its merits, from a dynamic perspective, to reach that objective.

Mr. Danon (France) (*spoke in French*): The disarmament machinery that organizes and implements the multilateralism to which we are all very attached is in a contrasting situation. That is particularly true as far as nuclear weapons are concerned. There is no longer any need to prove the vitality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The 2010 Review Conference gave all States parties a road map to take action on the Treaty's three pillars in the coming years. For us, respecting that road map is a priority. The Paris Conference, held from 30 June to 1 July, reinforced the cohesion among the five original nuclear-weapon States and facilitated the consideration of the ways and means to be implemented in order for them to meet their commitments by 2015.

The appointment of a facilitator and the selection of a host country for the conference on the implementation of the 1995 resolution are also important milestones on the NPT road map. The countries participating in the 2012 conference will have to devise, if they have the political will, a specific forum with respect to the long, hard road leading to a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems.

While progress is being made on the nuclear issue under the NPT, the same cannot be said with regard to the Conference on Disarmament (CD). Nevertheless, France is convinced that this is the only possible forum for discussing a cut-off treaty that has any chance of success. The high-level meeting debates confirmed, as if it were necessary, that the deadlock in the CD was not due to the forum itself but to a particular international context — we are facing conflicts of a political nature rather than procedural constraints. The rules of procedure, in particular the consensus rule, are guarantees to safeguard all countries' defence and security interests. Certainly it is today a paradox that the consensus rule is an element in the stalemate while also remaining indispensable to the negotiation itself.

But transferring the debate into another forum — to the General Assembly, as some hope, in the form of working groups — will not help to resolve the political problems that underlie the deadlock at the CD. On the contrary, it would enable them to persist while diluting the pressure to overcome them. Instead, it is our job to remind those who are at the root of this deadlock that they have nothing to gain, except perhaps a bit of time — but at what cost — by going against the grain of history.

Before I address the relevance of forums dealing with conventional weapons, allow me in passing to say a word about our annual forum, the Disarmament Commission. It must be acknowledged that the Commission has not lived up to its promise. More than 30 years after its establishment, and a countless number of cycles, the result of those years of deliberation is modest, not to mention the cost for the United Nations and for national delegations of repetitive meetings that yield no final result.

Between the years in which that body has not managed to agree upon an agenda, as in 2004 and 2005, and those in which work cycles came to an end without any tangible results, as we saw just this past spring, we cannot help but feel deep regret. Nonetheless, the Commission was able in the past to come up with useful elements, such as the 1999 guidelines for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, which unfortunately are not always respected by those calling for the establishment of such zones. That situation is no doubt due largely to strongly opposing interests and a certain lack of flexibility. However, even to establish confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons, for example, we manage to find agreement in other forums but not in the Commission. There may be some lessons to be learned in that connection with regard to the Commission's viability.

I should like to conclude by mentioning forums in the field of conventional weapons. Three series of negotiations have been completed in 15 years, which France applauds, particularly given the active role our country played in them — the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War and the Oslo Convention on Cluster Munitions. They have one thing in common. They relate to conventional weapons that inflict the most significant damage at the humanitarian level, including at the end of conflicts. They reflect the beneficial influence of and the ability to mobilize, civil society, whose role in the multilateral system should be further consolidated.

At the same time, the conclusion of the Ottawa and Oslo Conventions raises the question of the effectiveness of the forum on the Convention on Prohibitions or Restriction on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW). We can expect that next November will

be a critical moment for the credibility, and therefore the future, of that forum. We are here at the heart of a well-known problem regarding the efficiency of the disarmament machinery and whether a forum is suited to the negotiation that it is to host.

For France the situation is clear. The conclusion of the Ottawa and Oslo Conventions is not enough because they will not be adopted by the entire international community within a reasonable time frame. Their universalization, which will always remain a priority for us, is running up against the reticence of a number of key countries. We therefore regret that the countries with the largest stockpiles of anti-personnel mines or cluster munitions believe they cannot ratify those two Conventions in the near future.

Without resigning ourselves as we wait for them to sign up to those Conventions, we continue to seek ways to achieve tangible results on the ground. To that end, in November we will continue negotiating a sixth CCW protocol on cluster munitions. For our part, this assumed and well-thought-out choice of a sixth protocol will only be worthwhile if three key criteria are present — it must be legally binding, be compatible with the Oslo Convention, and must have a decisive, immediate humanitarian impact. We trust that the CCW forum will allow us to achieve that result.

Effective multilateralism must first be judged on its ability to resolve the problems of the day, in other words to create a safer world, capable of reducing the threats represented by weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons. In that regard, France shares the frustration expressed by nearly all countries during our work. Today some hope, through the draft resolutions that they are introducing, to unblock the situation in the CD and launch negotiations on the fissile material cut-off treaty. France will determine its vote on those draft resolutions on the basis of three criteria.

Ms. Borland (Belize), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The first is consistency among the draft resolutions themselves, as well as with regard to discussions carried out within the CD. Questioning the order of priorities for the four core issues on the CD's agenda or the specific mandates agreed to by all in the programme of work contained in document CD/1864 should therefore be ruled out. We believe that, far from advancing disarmament, that would be a step backwards.

The second is the clarity and relevance of the mandates. From that perspective, certain specific proposals seem interesting and others less so. Transferring discussions from the CD to working groups in the General Assembly whose composition, rules of procedure and financing are still unclear would be risky and counterproductive.

The last criterion is whether Member States would embrace them. Draft resolutions that promote new initiatives must achieve consensus or, in the event of a vote, be adopted by the vast majority of States. That is how negotiations were launched for the arms trade treaty, and those could soon conclude. But it is to be feared that a less than large-scale accession when voting takes place could deprive those new initiatives of the support, and thus the momentum, they need to be carried through.

Mr. Moktefi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): In view of the importance of challenges regarding the issue of disarmament machinery, the Algerian delegation would like to take part today in this thematic debate to set out its position on the matter, which is a subject of great controversy among Member States.

My delegation first wants to stress its interest in the briefings presented by the various members of the panel that took place on Friday on disarmament machinery. Interesting proposals were suggested to us to revitalize certain elements of the United Nations disarmament machinery. Those contributions come on top of analyses and proposals presented by Member States during the two high-level meetings in September 2010 and July 2011.

Algeria remains committed to the multilateral disarmament agenda and to strengthening the United Nations disarmament machinery. Given the state of paralysis of those mechanisms, it is vital for Member States to work together, cooperate sincerely and invest all their political capital in revitalizing the disarmament bodies in an effective, sustainable manner.

Given the various gains made by the international community thanks to the disarmament machinery, it is important to preserve the nature, role and utility of each component of the United Nations disarmament machinery even though everyone recognizes the need to enhance the effectiveness of those bodies — just as no one can doubt the fact that one reason for the stalemate of this machinery is the deliberate lack of political will.

Like other Member States, my delegation wants to express its disappointment at the fact that the Disarmament Commission has for a number of years been unable to adopt specific recommendations. In spite of that fact, Algeria reiterates its commitment to the Commission's mandate as the only specialized deliberative body of the multilateral machinery of the United Nations in the field of disarmament. My delegation therefore continues to fully support the work of the Disarmament Commission and calls on all Member States to show political will and flexibility so that that body can draw up specific recommendations on the issues on its agenda during the next cycle.

Algeria also reiterates that it is important to further strengthen dialogue and cooperation among the First Committee, the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament. Given the diversity of their purviews, the protracted stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament is undeniably a source of real concern. That situation is especially damaging to the interests of non-nuclear-weapon States.

Algeria believes that the stalemate cannot be attributed to a failing of the institutional mechanism and is not inherent to its working methods. It therefore cannot be attributed to the rules of procedure, particularly the consensus rule, or to the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament.

It is clear that the consensus rule is also a way of protecting the national security interests of all States at the same level, and not just the interests of the most powerful among them. In taking account of the security interests of all, this rule, in principle, confers legitimacy on the concluded treaty, and ensures its universality and effectiveness.

With regard to the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament, Algeria believes that its elements, inspired moreover from the Ten Commandments and placing the emphasis on nuclear danger, are still relevant. Nuclear weapons continue to constitute the gravest threat to humankind.

We should recall that the Conference on Disarmament was undeniably a boon to multilateral disarmament. It was created in 1978 by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament precisely to revitalize the disarmament mechanisms of the time.

The Conference cannot resume its substantive work unless Member States show the requisite political will to reach collective solutions able properly to tackle the challenges facing the security of all and international peace. There is therefore a need to act to that end, rather than to threaten to relegate the Conference to marginalization by falling back on other mechanisms.

Algeria believes that no other United Nations forum can supersede or relieve the Conference of its prerogatives or legitimize the dissociation of one of the fundamental themes of its mandate. Besides setting a potentially fateful precedent, that approach could call into question the integrity and balance that needs to be maintained among the central and complementary themes on the agenda of the Conference.

In terms of the work programme, our delegation continues to believe that decision CD/1864, which enjoyed consensus in May 2009, remains valid. That decision is far from perfect but it does constitute the result of a compromise that, as mentioned in its preambular part, is moving in the right direction. The decision seeks to launch an interactive negotiation and discussion process that should see a climate of confidence prevail and carry through negotiations on nuclear disarmament and other issues.

It appears that this aspect of decision CD/1864, which is clearly reflected in the preambular part, is often forgotten by some people and obscured by others who focus only on the negotiation of the fissile material cut-off treaty. Moreover, the decision has the merit, as the most recent achievement, of showing that the Conference is still viable and that it does have the capacity to break the impasse in which it finds itself.

Algeria remains convinced of the need to reiterate the commitment of the international community to revitalizing the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament. Should divergences continue to impede the Conference from doing its job, it would be necessary to convene the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. That would be an opportunity to reaffirm its purpose as part of a more integral review of the issue of disarmament, thereby leading to a new consensus on the priorities of disarmament and on the United Nations disarmament machinery.

Mr. Singh Gill (India): The United Nations plays a central role in the sphere of disarmament in accordance with its Charter. The United Nations disarmament machinery is the mechanism by which we give

expression and coherence to international efforts in the area of disarmament and international security.

At a moment when there is renewed interest in the issue of the revitalization of the disarmament machinery and the multilateral disarmament agenda, it is important to recall that this was one of the motivations that led to the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I), which assigned the primary responsibility for disarmament to the United Nations. Its Final Document, adopted by consensus, established the current disarmament machinery, comprising a triad made up of the First Committee, the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament (CD), and set their objectives and agenda. Allow me to set out briefly India's views on those three forums.

India recognizes the importance of, and is committed to, the work of the First Committee. The First Committee provides countries with diverse perspectives an opportunity to voice those perspectives and to submit draft resolutions on issues of priority to them. A process of debate and consultations over the session's three parts — the general debate, the thematic debate and the adoption of draft resolutions — helps the international community to sort through those different priorities. We are open to suggestions for improving housekeeping aspects and time management so that the quality of the dialogue at the First Committee can be raised. At the same time, we wish to preserve the unique nature and strength of the First Committee as a global multilateral forum on disarmament and related international security issues.

We also attach importance to the Disarmament Commission as the universal deliberative forum for building consensus on disarmament and international security issues. It is the only universal forum that provides for in-depth consideration of specific disarmament subjects. In our view the Commission should play an essential role in bringing back coherence to the currently fragmented international disarmament agenda. The Commission made very significant contributions in the past, including important sets of guidelines and recommendations to the General Assembly on issues such as the guidelines on confidence-building measures, on verification and on international arms transfers. We look forward to an early decision on the agenda of the next cycle, and active engagement by all countries in the Commission's work.

The Conference on Disarmament, recognized by SSOD-I as the single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament, continues to have the mandate, the membership, the credibility and the rules of procedure to discharge its responsibility. Not so long ago, a multilateral, verifiable and non-discriminatory treaty eliminating an entire category of weapons of mass destruction — the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction — was negotiated in the CD.

We share the widespread disappointment at the continuing impasse in the CD. However, we do not believe that the current impasse stems from the forum per se, or its rules of procedure. Since the CD's decisions impact on the national security of Member States, it is logical that the CD remain a Member State-driven forum and that it conduct its work and adopt its decisions by consensus. As the Secretary-General noted recently, the fault is not in the vehicle but in the driver. It is up to Member States to make the CD work, by negotiating multilateral treaties that can be implemented universally. Proposals that question the viability or relevance of the CD or put forth unrealistic alternatives will not lead to productive outcomes in taking forward the agreed multilateral agenda with the participation of all relevant countries.

The Secretariat, and in particular the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), has an important responsibility in assisting States in pursuing the multilateral disarmament agenda. It is also responsible for upholding the primary role of United Nations forums in disarmament. We believe that UNODA should be strengthened to facilitate the implementation of permanent treaty bodies under the United Nations, such as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction and the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects.

We also support greater coherence between the work undertaken in New York and in Geneva. The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, too, needs to be enabled fully with resources to realize its potential. It deserves greater support from the regular budget of the United Nations to be able to generate independent, in-depth and long-term

research on disarmament issues. That task cannot be accomplished when the Institute is overdependent on voluntary contributions, and therefore cannot devote human resources to priority issues on a sustainable basis. The United Nations should also make greater efforts to promote disarmament and non-proliferation education. The recommendations of the 2002 United Nations study remain an indispensable guide in that respect.

We have noted the support expressed for the CD in the latest report (A/66/125) of the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, which devoted its 2011 sessions to the issue of the revitalization of the CD and the taking forward of the multilateral disarmament agenda. We believe that that body should be more representative so that it can reflect the broadest range of perspectives. It should take an inclusive and forward-looking approach to global disarmament issues. There is an impression that our failure in addressing substantive disarmament and international security issues is due to procedural flaws and inherent inefficiency in the disarmament machinery. While there is always scope for improvement, we need to be careful in not unravelling the forums that have been built up over time with patience and foresight. In an interdependent world with complex security challenges, it is only inclusive multilateral processes that can balance the interests of important stakeholders, identify win-win situations and advance legally binding agreements that can be sustained over time and applied universally.

Furthermore, we believe that the United Nations disarmament machinery cannot be assessed in isolation from the larger international security architecture and the need for reform in the United Nations. As my Prime Minister said in his plenary address to the General Assembly on 24 September,

> "We need a stronger and more effective United Nations. We need a United Nations that is sensitive to the aspirations of everyone, rich or poor, big or small. For this, the United Nations and its principal organs, the General Assembly and the Security Council, must be revitalized and reformed." (*A/66/PV.22, p. 10*).

Mrs. Balaguer Labrada (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament established the disarmament machinery within the United Nations system. Therein each organ plays a fundamental role, with specific functions that must be preserved. Cuba attaches great importance to the need to make tangible progress in the negotiations and deliberations in the area of disarmament and arms control. Our country reaffirms the importance of the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament. It is deplorable that that body remains unable to carry out substantive work.

The solution, however, does not lie in beginning to ignore the Conference or in any way downplaying its importance or changing its working methods. Quite the contrary, it is our shared responsibility to preserve this body and to strengthen it. The Conference on Disarmament should as soon as possible adopt a broad-ranging, well-balanced programme of work that will take into account the real priorities that exist in the field of disarmament. The Conference must urgently launch negotiations on a convention to prohibit the development, manufacture, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons, which provides for their destruction and will lead to the total elimination in a non-discriminatory and verifiable manner of nuclear weapons within a specified time frame. While the negotiations on a treaty to prohibit the use of fissile material for nuclear weapons would be a positive step, it would also be insufficient in and of itself unless future steps were set out in order to achieve nuclear disarmament.

As Cuba stated during its past presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, that body is prepared to negotiate in a parallel manner a treaty that will eliminate and prohibit nuclear weapons, a treaty that will put an end to the arms race in outer space, a treaty that will provide effective security assurances for States such as Cuba that are not nuclear-weapon States, and a treaty that will prohibit the manufacture of fissile material for the manufacture of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

Nuclear disarmament must remain the highest priority. On that basis, we must forge the necessary consensus within the Conference on Disarmament. We reiterate our support for the appeal launched by the Non-Aligned Movement to begin negotiations as soon as possible on a gradual programme for the total elimination of all nuclear weapons within a specified time frame, including through a convention on nuclear weapons.

Allow me also to underscore the importance and relevance of the Disarmament Commission as the only specialized deliberative body within the multilateral machinery of the United Nations dealing with disarmament. Cuba fully supports the work of the Commission and hopes that all States will demonstrate the necessary political resolve and flexibility in order to reach agreements with regard to specific recommendations. Furthermore, we wish to raise our concerns concerning the proliferation of initiatives on the establishment of restricted groups of governmental experts to address issues in the field of disarmament and arms control, which are highly sensitive issues and of interest to all Member States. We believe that the establishment of such groups of experts should be the exception rather than the rule. Furthermore, we should focus on transparent and inclusive processes in which all Member States are involved on an equal footing.

Allow me to conclude by saying that Cuba fully supports the efforts made to enhance the disarmament machinery of the United Nations. We remain convinced, however, that the current paralysis affecting a large segment of the disarmament machinery is not due to the efficacy of its working methods, but rather to different reasons, in particular the lack of political will demonstrated by Member States in failing to make tangible progress in many relevant areas that are crucial to maintaining international peace and security, such as, for example, the issue of nuclear disarmament. If we truly wish to revitalize the United Nations disarmament machinery, then we should convene the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and we would no longer impede this process. We remain optimistic. Cuba will continue to do its utmost to meet the expectations of the international community in the area of disarmament.

Ms. Smolcic (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the members of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) and associated States, namely, Argentina, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and my own country, Uruguay.

Efforts of the international community in favour of international peace and security make indispensable the existence of a strengthened multilateral mechanism within the United Nations to deal with disarmament and non-proliferation issues. In that regard, MERCOSUR and associated States renew their commitment to the efficacy of the mechanism that was established by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, in 1978, which introduced a range of bodies with different, but complementary, functions with the objective of strengthening the role of the Organization in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. The progress made should be highlighted. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty are important milestones in international law.

However, the Conference on Disarmament, the single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament, as yet has been unable to agree on a programme of work that would allow for progress in addressing substantive issues on its agenda. In that regard, MERCOSUR and associated States believe that the Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the high-level meeting convened by the Secretary-General on 24 September 2010 on revitalizing the Conference on Disarmament, General Assembly resolution 65/93, and the general debate for the follow-up to the high-level meeting convened by the President of the General Assembly on 27 July, are clear expressions of the will and expectations of the international community that the full array of multilateral disarmament machinery, including the Conference on Disarmament, fulfil the objectives for which they were created.

Against that backdrop, MERCOSUR and associated States urge all members of the Conference on Disarmament to show greater political will to ensure the commencement of substantive work and the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive and balanced programme of work in order to make progress on the nuclear disarmament agenda.

MERCOSUR and associated States urge the Conference on Disarmament to emerge from this long-standing impasse and to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament that would begin negotiations on a time-bound programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, including a nuclear weapons convention. In that context, we reiterate our support for the Secretary-General's five-point proposal and his support for a nuclear weapons convention with a strengthened verification system.

MERCOSUR and associated States are convinced that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only guarantee against the use or threat of such weapons. Until that goal is met, non-nuclear States should receive unambiguous, unconditional and legally binding negative security assurances from the nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of such weapons.

We express our concern with regard to signs of an arms race in outer space. We therefore reiterate the importance of negotiating a binding instrument in that area. We also reiterate the importance that we attach to strict compliance with the existing regime on the use of outer space that recognizes the common interest of humankind in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes.

MERCOSUR and associated States express their willingness to continue negotiations on a multilateral non-discriminatory treaty on fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices that would include an international verification regime and promote the goals of disarmament and non-proliferation.

MERCOSUR and associated States regret the lack of progress within the Disarmament Commission, which has been unable to issue substantive recommendations in its respective working groups on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation; on the elements of the draft declaration of the 2010 decade as the fourth disarmament decade; and on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. We hope that all States at the 2012 session of the Disarmament Commission will be imbued with the spirit of commitment, flexibility and cooperation in order to attain tangible results.

The Acting Chair: I shall now give the floor to representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Ismayil-Zada (Azerbaijan): I would like to exercise the right of reply to respond to the statement made recently by the delegation of Armenia.

The documentary evidence, and there is an amount of it, proves that Armenia unleashed the war, attacked Azerbaijan and occupied its ancestral territories, including the Nagorno-Karabakh region and seven adjacent districts, carried out ethnic cleansing on a massive scale and established on the captured Azerbaijani territories their ethnically constructed subordinate separate entity. The war led to the death or wounding of thousands of Azerbaijanis, the majority of them women, elderly persons and children.

Despite ongoing political efforts towards the earliest resolution of the conflict, the ongoing military activities in the occupied areas of Azerbaijan are in gross violation of international law and serve to further consolidate the current status quo of the occupation, secure the results of ethnic cleansing and the colonization of the captured territories, as well as creating a serious obstruction to the peaceful solution of the conflict.

Armenia is intensively building up its military presence and capability in the Nagorno-Karabakh region and other occupied territories of Azerbaijan. The available data indicates that since the occupation began, the numbers of unaccounted for and uncontrolled arms in those territories have consistently increased. We are seriously concerned, inter alia, by the fact that the conventional arms-control mechanism is not effective in those territories. The accumulation of a great number of armaments and ammunition therein beyond international control poses serious threats to regional peace and security.

In that context, we regret that the international community, especially those mediating the negotiation process, show a certain indifference to this problem, which in fact negatively affects prospects for the earliest peaceful resolution of the conflict. Our particular concern relates to the possibility of the use by terrorist groups of specific weapons, including individual anti-aircraft missile systems. In that regard, we deem it necessary to take more efficient measures aimed at preventing those who are in effective military and political control of the occupied territories from acquiring conventional weapons, as well as to disclose their attempts to deny responsibility.

It is curious that the statements of Armenian officials are full of accusations towards Azerbaijan about its allegedly militaristic intentions and armaments race. The Armenians are stoking hysteria about the rapid development of Azerbaijan, while the true reason for Armenian misinterpretation is launched in all international forums. The purpose is to create a smokescreen for its intention in the occupied territories and to win time. As for an increasing military budget, Armenia neglects to say that the annual defence spending of Azerbaijan remains in line with overall budget increases, that Azerbaijan continues to spend a

much smaller percentage of its gross domestic product (GDP) on its army than Armenia spends on its, and that the size of the armed forces of Azerbaijan is proportional to its population, territory and length of borders and remains smaller than that of Armenia.

It is worth mentioning that the President of Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan, stated on 25 May 2010 during his visit to NATO headquarters that

> "The Armenian army has types of ammunition that countries 10 times the size of Armenia would dream of having."

Those words are self-explanatory. It is not accidental that Armenia's military expenditure in terms of GDP calculations is one of the highest rates in the world. That is why Armenia, which implemented illegal military projects to supply its armed forces, is continuing to be a threat to the stability and security of our region.

Armenia has no right to say which State can or cannot be elected as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. That is a violation of the United Nations Charter. For the Armenian delegation in particular I have to state that some time ago Azerbaijan was elected as a non-permanent member of the Security Council.

In conclusion, I declare that as long as Armenia continues to follow its aggressive policy, any talks about peace, stability and all-inclusive cooperation in the region are irrelevant.

Ms. Khoudaverdian (Armenia): I have asked for the floor to exercise my delegation's right of reply to address the statement made by the delegation of Azerbaijan. It is truly disappointing that, given the important agenda of the First Committee, which should be the main focus, the Azerbaijani side instead uses every opportunity presented to it to falsely discredit Armenian Nagorno-Karabakh.

We regret that another attempt was made by the representative of Azerbaijan in this room to mislead the international community by misrepresenting the causes and consequences of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The reference to the so-called military occupation by Armenia made by the representative of the Azerbaijani delegation is totally misleading. Armenia has never started any war or aggression whatsoever, never conducted so-called ethnic cleansing, et cetera. Moreover, it was Azerbaijan that started a full-scale war against the peaceful population of Nagorno-Karabakh, thus forcing them to take up arms in order to protect their lives and dignity.

Today the international community is witnessing the fact that Azerbaijan continues to accumulate military assets at an increased rate. The already substantial defence budget rose by some 45 per cent between 2010 and 2011. Azerbaijan's official defence spending has risen twentyfold during the presidency of Ilham Aliyev, with an average annual increase of approximately 50 per cent, from $135 million in 2003 to $3.12 billion today. Azerbaijan apparently increased its military spending by 30 per cent in 2004, 71 per cent in 2005, 66 per cent in 2007 and 45 per cent in 2011, thus apparently trying to fulfil the 2007 pledge by the President of Azerbaijan to exceed the entire Armenian State budget.

Weapons purchases and the persistent belligerent rhetoric of Azerbaijani leaders also have a highly negative and, may I say, disastrous impact on regional security and stability, and seriously undermine the process of the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Furthermore, Azerbaijan continues to reject calls from the Minsk Group co-chairs and from the Secretary-General, the most recent made at the sidelines of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Astana on 1 December 2010, for the removal of snipers from the line of contact. Armenia, along with the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs continues to be alarmed by the growing wave of Azerbaijani incursions across the Nagorno-Karabakh-Azerbaijan line of contact and its ceasefire violations throughout 2010 and 2011, which resulted in tragic and unnecessary loss of life among both Armenian and Azerbaijani soldiers. Numerous deliberate provocations on the line of contact this year serve as concrete examples of Azerbaijan's insistence on seeking militaristic ways to deal with the Nagorno-Karabakh issue.

The Azerbaijani side is brazenly attempting to distract the international community's attention from the reality on the ground by shifting responsibility for its own militaristic actions and ceasefire violations on to others and sparing no effort in portraying them as aggressors.

Unfortunately, the practice of putting the blame on others in order to hide its own crimes has become a regular exercise for Azerbaijan. It was the wish of my delegation to voice our concerns in the Security Council regarding the increasing threats to regional

security and instability in the region at large and in South Caucasus, and by no means to transform the debate in this Committee into a meaningless discussion with Azerbaijan.

The Acting Chair: I once again give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan, who wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply for a second time.

Mr. Ismayil-Zada (Azerbaijan): I apologize for requesting the floor again to exercise the right of reply for a second time in response to the remarks made by the representative of Armenia.

We proceed from the strong understanding that the United Nations should be resorted to by Member States in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Organization, and not be misused for the political advantage of those who gravely violate international law, advocate the culture of impunity and promote dangerous ideas of racial, ethnic and religious superiority.

The stance of Armenia testifies to the fact that it is far from even thinking of engaging in a sober and efficient search for peace. We consider the provocative and irresponsible behaviour of Armenia as an open challenge to the conflict settlement process and a serious threat to international and regional peace and security. Azerbaijan expects that Member States will convince Armenia to cease its destructive policies, to respect the generally accepted norms and principles of international law and to negotiate in good faith with a view to finding a durable solution to the conflict.

The Acting Chair: I once again give the floor to the representative of Armenia, who wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply for a second time.

Ms. Khoudaverdian (Armenia): I regret having to reply again during this meeting of the First Committee. I also regret that again the delegation of Azerbaijan continues its practice of using the floor for biased accusations.

I must remind members again that Azerbaijan remains the only State party to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) that is deliberately in breach of limitation, one of the key principles of the CFE. The Azerbaijani holdings in battle tanks are 381, but the permitted ceiling is 220. Its artillery holdings are 469, but the permitted ceiling is 285. In 2011 there have been sizeable purchases of additional Treaty-limited equipment — 47 artillery pieces and 106 armoured combat vehicles.

Moreover, despite non-binding Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and United Nations arms embargoes, Azerbaijan is actively pursuing an arms race. It has already purchased 24 “crocodile” attack helicopters, 29 BTR-70 armoured vehicles and some 35 122-millimetre and 152-millimetre artillery pieces. In 2010 it acquired RAK-12 multiple-rocket launching systems, which have a range of 8 to 13 kilometres.

Azerbaijan is also developing a domestic weapons industry to produce small arms and armoured vehicles with help from a number of regional countries.

It is noteworthy that this data and information, reflected in the reports and research conducted by a number of intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations, are based on official statements made by the Azerbaijani leadership.

Despite Azerbaijan’s non-constructive stance, Armenia remains committed to the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. We strongly believe that the solution of the problem must be achieved only by peaceful means, based on the principles of international law.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.