

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND AND THIRTY-SIXTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 23 August 2006, at 10.20 a.m.

President: Mr. Anton PINTER (Slovakia)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1036th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. But before commencing the usual agenda of this meeting, let me read the following: “Yesterday we learned with deep sorrow of the crash of the Russian airliner near Donetsk, which killed 170 people. On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament, I wish to express our most sincere condolences to the families of the victims and to the Government of the Russian Federation.”

I will now proceed with the programme of today’s meeting. In accordance with the outline of proposed activities for the presidency of Slovakia, the Conference begins its focused, structured debate on agenda item 7, entitled “Transparency in armaments”. But I shall first make an introductory statement.

Transparency in armaments is the final agenda item to be discussed in a structured way during this year’s session. In this respect I wish to stress that it is the last but not the least.

I would like to briefly introduce the topic with the intention of just outlining some highlights of the development of this agenda item. I hope that it will be your inputs into the discussion during these two days that will help the Conference on Disarmament, and possibly the General Assembly, to further develop the understanding of the concept for the sake of making the world safer by reducing misunderstanding or miscalculations of each other’s intentions.

The development of the concept of transparency in armaments in current terms dates back to the 1980s when the United Nations General Assembly promoted it in a number of ways as a part of the general process of confidence-building. On the recommendation of the Disarmament Commission, the General Assembly endorsed in 1988 specific guidelines on confidence-building with a view to strengthening international peace and security and facilitating the process of arms limitation and disarmament. These and ensuing efforts resulted in 1991 in the adoption of United Nations General Assembly resolution 46/36 L. United Nations Member States requested the United Nations Secretary-General to establish and maintain a universal and non-discriminatory Register of Conventional Arms. In addition, the resolution requested the Conference on Disarmament to address the question of the interrelated aspects of the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of arms, and to elaborate practical means to increase openness and transparency related to the transfer of high technology with military applications and to weapons of mass destruction. The Conference on Disarmament responded to this request by appointing, in 1992, a Special Coordinator with the task of conducting consultations on all aspects of this question. As a result of these consultations, the Conference adopted a decision on organizational arrangements for the implementation of resolution 46/36 L which guided the work of an Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency in Armaments in 1993 and in 1994. The reports of the Committee’s work became part of the 1993 and 1994 CD reports to the General Assembly. However, the divergence of views on the duration of the mandate of the Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency in Armaments prevented the Conference on Disarmament from re-establishing the Committee in 1995 and later.

The Conference dealt with this issue in a formal way once again when the CD decided to appoint a Special Coordinator on agenda item 7, namely “Transparency on armaments”, with a

(The President)

mandate “to seek the views of its members on the most appropriate way to deal with the questions related to this item”. His reports were presented at the 799th plenary meeting on 25 June 1998 and at the 805th plenary meeting on 27 August 1998.

Since then transparency in armaments has continued to develop within the United Nations framework. In this respect it is my utmost pleasure to welcome among us His Excellency Ambassador Roberto García Moritán, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of Argentina, who chaired the 2006 Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, established by the United Nations Secretary-General under United Nations General Assembly resolution 60/226. As this Group concluded its work only a few weeks ago on 28 July 2006, we will have an exceptional opportunity to get acquainted with its fresh results and hopefully become inspired for our deliberations on this topic.

Before giving Ambassador García Moritán the floor, let me briefly introduce some highlights of his intensive and successful diplomatic career. Mr. Roberto García Moritán has been a member of the Argentine Foreign Service since 1970; Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament and other United Nations bodies dealing with international security and disarmament during the period 1989-1993; a member of the Board of Directors of the Argentine Atomic Commission from 1993 to 1998; Deputy Permanent Representative to the CD from 1981 to 1987; Permanent Representative to the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly from 1989 to 1993; Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on issues of international security from 1987 to 1989; Under-Secretary for Latin American Affairs from 1999 to 2002; Director-General of Latin American Politics from 2002 to 2003; Under-Secretary of Foreign Politics from 2004 to 2005; and currently Secretary of Foreign Affairs.

I now give the floor to Ambassador García Moritán.

Mr. GARCIA MORITAN (Argentina) (translated from Spanish): Thank you, Mr. President, for your kind words. I express my condolences to the delegation of the Russian Federation for the recent occurrence to which you referred this morning.

Since this is the first time I have the honour to take the floor in this forum, allow me at the beginning of my statement to express my appreciation for the work you have been doing as President of the Conference on Disarmament. You have just arrived and you have already embarked on a major task. Your dedication and enthusiasm are a guarantee of efficient guidance and fruitful work in the run-up to the submission of the annual report to the United Nations General Assembly which we will approve at the end of this third session of the Conference on Disarmament. You can count on the support of my delegation in performing this task. I would also like to extend our congratulations to the authorities of this Conference, especially the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva and Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament.

(Mr. García Moritán, Argentina)

I am participating in this plenary session for the purpose of referring to the agenda item “Transparency in armaments”, since it reflects the particular importance which my country attaches to this matter, and in particular our interest in promoting and consolidating confidence-building measures among States.

In this regard, allow me first to focus on this latter point. The purpose of confidence-building measures is to reduce uncertainty and misperceptions with regard to the behaviour of States, thus reducing the risk of military confrontation. Bearing in mind that this concept is a dynamic one, Argentina is convinced that its implementation and consolidation not only make it possible to prevent armed conflict but also offer an effective tool to encourage, through greater transparency and cooperation in the field of defence and security, greater integration in the political, economic and cultural spheres.

Fortunately the Conference on Disarmament is not starting from scratch in addressing the agenda item we are considering today. The Member States of the United Nations have accomplished important work in the field of transparency in armaments through their forums and developments in different regions. On this occasion, allow me to focus on one of these initiatives, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, a mechanism which has undoubtedly become one of the most important confidence-building measures adopted at the global level. The concept of confidence-building measures which I referred to earlier was no doubt implicit in the spirit of the Member States of the United Nations when in 1991, by an overwhelming majority, they adopted resolution 46/36 which created the Register of Conventional Arms. The purpose of the Register has been to create an early warning mechanism capable of indicating certain trends in the military equipment of States, and, after 13 years in existence, it has succeeded in becoming an effective instrument to promote understanding among States and prevent surprises that could destabilize international peace and security.

The same resolution which created the Register also allowed for its periodic review. In this regard, allow me to refer to the work of the Group of Governmental Experts which was given the mandate to carry out the review, and which I had the honour to chair in 2003 and recently in 2006. As you already know, on both occasions progress was made which highlights the growing importance that Member States have attached to this mechanism. Specifically, in 2003, the scope of the Register was extended, firstly by reducing from 100 to 75 millimetres the threshold for large-calibre artillery systems to be reported under category III, and secondly by incorporating portable air defence systems into category VII, which covers missiles and missile launchers. I do not need to stress the importance of these decisions, particularly the last one. Also on that occasion the Group of Experts recommended inviting Member States to submit information on transfers of small arms and light weapons, mentioning this type of conventional weapons in the Register for the first time.

Last 28 July, the Group of Governmental Experts continued the positive trend and the progress that began in 2003 and adopted three important measures. Firstly, it reduced the threshold under category VI (warships) from 750 to 500 metric tons. Secondly, the recommendation from 2003 on small arms and light weapons marked an additional step through the adoption of a standardized form to enable States wishing to do so to report on imports and

(Mr. García Moritán, Argentina)

exports of such weapons, allowing better identification and harmonization in the submission of the information. The form that you will see is divided into two parts and includes a breakdown of small arms and light weapons, which, although not in the nature of a definition, is indicative of the equipment it includes. I think this is the first time we have a document which shows us what is meant by small arms and light weapons, though without constituting a definition. The third decision, which I could describe as significant, because it has to do with the universalization of the Register, is related to the agreement reached that information submitted should include only transfers to United Nations Member States. The importance of this agreement lies in the possibility of creating the necessary conditions so that, from the year 2007 onwards, all the permanent members of the Security Council can participate with information in the Register.

In relation to universalization, which is undoubtedly an element of fundamental importance for consolidation as a confidence-building measure, allow me to make a few additional comments. Firstly, since the establishment of the Register 169 States have participated at least once and only 22 States (15 from Africa and 7 from Asia) have not yet contributed information to the Register. Another measure that made possible an increase in the participation of States was the adoption of the “nil return”, guaranteeing that even those States which have not effected transfers in the seven existing categories will continue to participate and hence to strengthen this important mechanism. Secondly, universalization is directly related to extending the scope of the Register. The additional step which I mentioned earlier, regarding transfers of small arms and light weapons, becomes fundamental because, although there is not a specific category for them yet, a category VIII for example, the adoption of the standardized form will allow an increase in participation by a large number of States, since for these weapons the Register is of particular importance. I am referring particularly to the regions of Africa and Latin America. The Register of Conventional Arms is of the utmost importance today as it has enabled disclosure of 97 per cent of transfers of conventional arms effected at the global level, and has therefore made it possible to increase transparency in the field of security. I think this overall figure of 97 per cent is clear evidence of the significance of the Register. Obviously, there is still a lot to be done in order to ensure that this participation is more stable, but we are on the right track. I am convinced that future work to revise the Register will continue to consolidate this important mechanism by means of improvements.

The importance my country has attached to the strengthening of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, as expressed by the successive terms in the Chair of its Group of Governmental Experts, falls within the context of a broader commitment on the part of my country throughout recent decades to the development, implementation and strengthening of confidence-building measures at the subregional, regional and global levels. An example is the recent circulation, together with a group of countries, of a draft resolution to be negotiated during the next session of the General Assembly, inspired by the initiative for the conclusion of an arms trade treaty. We believe it is possible to achieve not only greater transparency in the acquisition of conventional weapons but also the devising of common understandings to ensure that such acquisitions take place in keeping with applicable international law.

(Mr. García Moritán, Argentina)

My delegation is not demanding when it comes to evaluating the way or methodology by means of which the Conference on Disarmament should work in order to identify and, if appropriate, adopt additional measures to move forward in the field of transparency in armaments or any other item on the agenda of our Conference. The manner of addressing an issue, whether formal or informal, does not detract from its importance, but reflects the degree of consensus it may enjoy at a given point in time. However, the current state of paralysis in the Conference on Disarmament - a situation which has started to threaten the consolidation of the disarmament regime, the non-proliferation regime and arms control at the global level - should not lead to a lower level of aspiration with regard to the results we expect from the sole universal negotiating forum on disarmament. This is not the first time that the Conference on Disarmament is facing an impasse, but it is indeed difficult to understand this situation given previous situations that were the result of East-West confrontation. In the current circumstances, to see - to really see - the poor results produced by our Conference is painful, and sometimes we ask ourselves whether we should not change some rules of procedure and drop the rule of consensus in decision-making, or whether the time has not come to negotiate instruments, those which we consider to be important, outside this Conference. For those of us who have spent much of our professional life in the Conference on Disarmament, this is not a very agreeable feeling. But nor is the continuation of the impasse.

Without prejudice to what I have been saying, my delegation, as it has stated on various occasions, hopes to see the prompt resumption of the work of the Conference through the adoption of a programme of work that addresses the interests and priorities of all of its member States. It is clear that in order to achieve this objective, more flexibility in national positions will be needed. In this regard I wish to renew the commitment and appeal for such flexibility which the delegations of Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela made in June 2005 to all Member States of the Conference with a view to securing the prompt initiation of substantive negotiations. During that presentation we said we favour the prompt initiation of negotiations for the conclusion of a non-discriminatory and international verifiable instrument for prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices. We also consider that although verification should be included in such an instrument, as it is a fundamental element in any disarmament and non-proliferation agreement, we were prepared to consider a modification of the Shannon mandate in order to reach consensus so as to remove the current deadlock in this forum.

My delegation hopes that the proposal submitted by the delegation of the United States on the mandate for an FMCT can help foster progress in that direction. We continue to be convinced that the adoption of this treaty, together with the full universalization of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, will help to strengthen the regime for disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. I take this opportunity to repeat the call to States that have not yet done so to join as non-nuclear-weapon States.

Argentina considers that the machinery offered by this forum has not been exhausted, and is convinced that there is enough room to advance towards the fulfilment of the objectives of the Conference. It remains to renew the political commitment in order to demonstrate to our

(Mr. García Moritán, Argentina)

societies that their governments are still committed to the development of instruments on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control that are capable of guaranteeing a more stable and safer world.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Argentina for his intervention and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. Thank you very much for coming and visiting our Conference. I wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

In addition to the address made by the Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Argentina, the following speakers will take the floor during the plenary meeting: the United States of America, Mr. William Malzahn; Japan, Mr. Yoshinobu Hiraishi; Italy, Ambassador Carlo Trezza; the Russian Federation, Ambassador Valery Loshchinin; India, Ambassador Jayant Prasad; Germany, Ambassador Bernhard Brasack; the Netherlands, Ambassador Johannes Landman.

I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, Mr. William Malzahn.

Mr. MALZAHN (United States of America): Mr. President, let me start by offering our condolences to Ukraine for their tragic airline crash.

Our delegation takes the floor today to discuss transparency in armaments, the seventh item on the CD's agenda.

The TIA initiative arose at the end of the cold war when a number of States questioned the relevance of a multilateral security agenda that focused exclusively on weapons of mass destruction and failed to address conventional weapons. The success in Europe and elsewhere in the field of confidence-building measures related to conventional weapons had elevated the concept of openness in military matters to a high level. The international community looked at Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the more than 30 other conflicts employing conventional weapons that had been fought around the world during the 1980s and concluded that we could do more to prevent such conflicts by developing a system of transparency designed to reduce the occurrence of dangerous misperceptions about the intentions of States and to promote trust among States. Governments balanced this against the sovereign rights of States to defend themselves under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. The end result of a complex and tortuous negotiation was United Nations General Assembly resolution 46/36 L, "Transparency in armaments", adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 6 December 1991.

This resolution launched a two-track process. The first track established the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, and the second track called for the CD to take up the subject of transparency in armaments.

Let me start by disclosing here that I have a somewhat biased view of the United Nations Register since I have been working on it since 1995 and participating in the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register since 1997.

(Mr. Malzahn, United States)

As I said, United Nations General Assembly resolution 46/36 L established a multi-step process to operationalize a voluntary register of conventional arms transfers. The Register was intended to help prevent the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of arms in order to promote stability and strengthen international peace and security, taking into account the legitimate security needs of States and the principle of undiminished security at the lowest possible level of armaments. Member States were called upon to provide annually to the United Nations Secretary-General relevant data on imports and exports of conventional arms to be included in the Register. Member States were also invited to report on their military holdings and procurement through national production and relevant policies

The technical procedures for the Register were developed in 1992 by a panel of experts appointed by the United Nations Secretary-General and endorsed by the General Assembly. Seven major categories of military equipment were included in the Register: main battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, large-calibre artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, and missiles and missile launchers.

By any measure, the Register has been a resounding success, establishing a global norm of transparency and accountability in military matters and reinforcing civilian control of the military. During its 13 years of operation, more than 170 States have participated in the Register at least once, 142 States have participated three times or more, 101 have participated at least seven times, and 50 have participated every year. Annual participation has ranged from 90 to 126 States. Still, by reporting on both imports and exports, the Register has captured the vast majority of the international arms trade in the Register's seven categories. Even though some States may not participate in a given year or may never have participated, the Register still captures transfers involving many of them. For example, for the latest completed calendar year, 2004, 22 countries that did not participate that year were captured in the reports of other countries, and more than 10 of these have never participated in the Register. The United States continues to make it a strong objective to universalize annual participation in the Register.

Groups of Governmental Experts or GGEs convened by the Secretary-General have conducted periodic reviews of the Register's operation and have made recommendations on its further development in 1994, 1997, 2000, 2003 and 2006. The first three concluded that the Register's existing seven categories adequately covered the weapons of most concern to the international community. However, feedback received from a series of regional and subregional workshops held between 2001 and 2005 propelled the last two GGEs to make substantive changes to the Register. These workshops revealed overwhelming support for increasing the Register's relevance by having it address transfers of small arms and light weapons as well. The 2003 GGE responded by adding man-portable air defence systems, lowering the artillery threshold from 100 millimetres to 75 millimetres, and opening the door to voluntary reporting of transfers of SALW. The 2006 Group of Governmental Experts, which just concluded its work, opened the door further by agreeing to an optional standardized form for reporting SALW transfers and recommending that States in a position to do so report such transfers to the Register. The GGE also agreed to lower the reporting threshold for warships and submarines from 750 metric tons to 500 metric tons. The GGE also laid the foundation for participation by all permanent members of the Security Council and all major exporters of conventional arms. These substantive additions demonstrate the Register's continuing vitality and relevance.

(Mr. Malzahn, United States)

A few minutes ago you heard the statement of the Chairman of the 2003 and 2006 Group of Governmental Experts on the Register, Ambassador Roberto García Moritán, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of Argentina. Let me take this moment to thank him for taking the time from his important ministerial responsibilities to chair our GGEs. Without his ability, dedication, experience and tenacity to guide our work, we would have had a far less successful outcome in our deliberations.

Secretary-General Annan summed up the Register's role when he noted in his foreword to the 2006 GGE's report to the United Nations General Assembly, "the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms plays a valuable role in the world's efforts to discourage the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of [conventional] arms ... At a time when the international community faces ... challenges in pursuing disarmament and upholding the non-proliferation regime, the positive outcome of the Group's deliberations is especially welcome".

The second, and unfortunately far less successful, part of the TIA initiative asked the Conference on Disarmament to "address, as soon as possible, the question of ... interrelated aspects of the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of arms, including ... holdings and procurement through national production, and to elaborate universal and non-discriminatory practical means to increase openness and transparency in this field", and to "address the problems of, and the elaboration of practical means to increase, openness and transparency related to the transfer of high technology with military applications and to weapons of mass destruction". No time frame was specified for the CD's work.

The CD added TIA to its agenda in 1992. It was the CD's first new agenda item in over 10 years and the first one directly related to conventional arms control. Informal meetings were held during the first year to introduce the CD to the subject. In 1993, the CD established the TIA Ad Hoc Committee, which began working to develop practical means for increasing openness and transparency in military matters. Unfortunately, the Ad Hoc Committee split into two camps - those who wanted to discuss transparency in conventional weapons and those who wanted to discuss transparency in weapons of mass destruction - and TIA discussions became a dialogue of the deaf. Still, the Ad Hoc Committee was quite active, discussing 16 working papers and a host of other suggestions. During the 1994 session, the Ad Hoc Committee attempted unsuccessfully to bridge its differences and find common ground on concrete proposals.

In 1995, these spilled over into a general debate in the CD on the relationship between conventional and nuclear disarmament, and the CD established just two Ad Hoc Committees that year - one on CTBT and the other on FMCT. Yes, the CD established an FMCT Ad Hoc Committee in 1995, but it never met as the CD failed to select a chairman for it, and it was held hostage to agreement on the re-establishment of the TIA, NSA, and PAROS Ad Hoc Committees and on the establishment of a nuclear disarmament Ad Hoc Committee. That is the origin of the paralysis that afflicts this Conference today.

(Mr. Malzahn, United States)

In 1998, the CD demoted TIA from an ad hoc committee to a Special Coordinator to hold consultations on the merits of TIA, the scope for activity on TIA, and ways for the CD to address TIA. TIA since has been unable to recover its Ad Hoc Committee status under the various proposals for a work programme.

The United States has strongly supported the TIA concept since its inception, and continues to do so. Our delegation is disappointed that TIA over the years has been moved to the proverbial back burner in discussions about the CD's work programme. This year's focused plenary discussions, however, have shown clearly that the CD, meeting in plenary session, can have a rich and meaningful discussion on any topic of interest to its members. Thus, our delegation looks forward to an early decision by this Conference to continue in-depth discussions on TIA and other items on the CD's agenda, and to commence negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of the United States of America for his statement and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Japan, Mr. Hiraishi.

Mr. HIRAISHI (Japan): Mr. President, at the outset, let me offer you, Ambassador Pinter, my delegation's warmest congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament at this important time, when the Conference is displaying such positive signs of progress. We have the utmost faith in your ability to steer us towards this year's successful conclusion.

In line with this year's endeavour by the P6 to effectively organize our work, we welcome the holding of structured debates on transparency in armaments, TIA. Even though Japan is convinced that the immediate commencement of negotiations on an FMCT is the main priority of the Conference on Disarmament, this does not mean that other items on the agenda can be ignored. Certainly, enhancing openness and transparency in armaments is conducive to the prevention of arms races and excessive arms build-ups, and therefore, the issue of TIA is recognized as critically important in relation to the promotion of international disarmament. Japan intends to actively participate and contribute to these discussions.

When the issue of TIA is brought up for consideration, the contribution of the United Nations conventional arms Register can never be discounted. It was established by the resolution on transparency in armaments submitted by Japan in cooperation with the then EC in 1991 to the United Nations General Assembly. In recent years, more than 110 countries register every year, and as of 2004, 170 countries had registered at least once. According to Ambassador Donowaki, who is a well-respected expert in this field and gave a presentation at the Group of Governmental Experts meeting on the Register this year, and also as mentioned in the statement made by Ambassador García Moritán earlier this morning, approximately 97 per cent of the world's arms transactions are made transparent as a result of the participation by major arms-exporting States. In the light of the current state of international security, nation States are prone to view military secrecy as paramount to enhance national security. However,

(Mr. Hiraishi, Japan)

the fact that so many United Nations Member States participate in the Register indicates the idea is taking hold that greater mutual security can be achieved through improved transparency in armaments.

Likewise, the meetings of the GGE on the United Nations conventional arms Register have steadily generated a great number of welcome accomplishments. The inclusion of MANPADS as a new subcategory under “Missiles and missile launchers”, and agreement to a standardized reporting form for small arms and light weapons, are just a couple of recent examples of these accomplishments.

In this manner, through the review of the Register, its reliability is being improved as a confidence-building measure. Furthermore, while welcoming increases in the number of participating countries, we must continue to strive for the universalization of the Register. Given that the Register is a confidence-building measure, we must literally build confidence through the ongoing involvement of all United Nations Member States.

Efforts towards the creation of an arms trade treaty (ATT) within the United Nations framework should also be given due attention. Japan, along with six other countries - Argentina, Australia, Costa Rica, Finland, Kenya and the United Kingdom - have circulated a draft resolution on an ATT. Urging all nations to take responsibility for their arms transfers, the ATT aims to reduce unregulated and irresponsible weapons transfers. Indeed, assuring the responsible transfer of arms through the ATT, and registering them in accordance with the United Nations Register, are mutually reinforcing measures, contributing to the strengthening of confidence-building, therefore enhancing both global and regional security.

As I stated, we have witnessed steady progress in international efforts in the area of TIA. This indicates an increasing international awareness of the importance of this issue. However, I would like to remind you that these efforts and initiatives have been taken outside of the CD. Within the CD, TIA has been addressed as an agenda item. Yet, over the last few years there have been no substantial discussions.

Given the current unfavourable international security environment, do we have the luxury to leave this situation as it is? Certainly not. While acknowledging that the CD is a multilateral negotiating body, it surely can and should play an active and central role in international endeavours to improve TIA. Therefore we should look at the CD's role with fresh eyes and explore how the CD could contribute to the further promotion of TIA.

The first and most important step for this purpose is to seriously study and follow the ongoing activities made at the global, regional and national levels, and to identify problems which require more action. Also the establishment, in the future, of a feedback mechanism on the achievements of each forum would be extremely helpful for our objectives.

In this regard, I appreciated the statement made by Ambassador Moritán, the GGE Chairperson, on the United Nations Register. Updating the Conference directly about the

(Mr. Hiraishi, Japan)

GGE's achievements, progress and initiatives on TIA within the United Nations framework will greatly assist our examination of transparency. We hope that this practice can be continued after the conclusion of every future GGE meeting.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Japan for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Now I would like to give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Italy.

Mr. TREZZA (Italy): Mr. President, this is the first time I am taking the floor under your presidency of the CD, and this is the moment to express congratulations and best wishes to you for a successful presidency. You can count on the support of the Italian delegation.

I would also like to express my delegation's condolences to the Russian delegation for the tragic air accident that took place yesterday in Russia.

I would like first of all to express my appreciation for your very useful introduction on the issue of transparency in armaments, which is the agenda item we are discussing today.

Transparency in armaments is one of the items on the CD agenda, and the Italian delegation is ready to address it at this stage. At the national level we have at present no specific negotiating or deliberative suggestions to make under this agenda item. We recognize, however, that transparency in armaments remains a key feature of disarmament and non-proliferation. It is a concept closely linked and complementary to verification. The combination of the two concepts - transparency and verification - forms a major contribution to building confidence in the field of armaments. The greater the transparency in armaments, the deeper the trust and the confidence in one country's intentions. The greater the transparency, the less verification is necessary. The more activities with military and civilian potentialities are open and transparent, the fewer suspicions they will raise about their possible military implications. Pursuing clandestine activities will make it more difficult for countries to regain the confidence of the international community.

Transparency is a "horizontal issue". In Italian, if I may use my mother tongue for a moment, we use the term "trasversale" - transversal - in the sense that it is common to all sectors of armaments and disarmament, be they conventional or non-conventional.

In the conventional field, one of the major achievements reached so far is the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. I would like to express my delegation's appreciation for the comprehensive presentation which was made by the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Argentina, Ambassador García Moritán, who chaired the Group of Governmental Experts on transparency in armaments and on the Register. His statement was significant not only as far as transparency is concerned, but also on other issues which he mentioned and which are key to our considerations. With regard to the Register, we expect more countries to actively participate in this exercise. The fact that the Register does not encompass more kinds of armaments cannot be a reason for not contributing to it.

(Mr. Trezza, Italy)

Transparency is also needed for weapons of mass destruction. I shall not deal with chemical and biological transparency. These armaments are no longer on the CD agenda. Thanks to negotiations within our Conference, they are now disciplined by specific international treaties and should thus be dealt with within the appropriate existing forums. We cannot say the same for nuclear weapons, which are not - as we well know - disciplined by a comprehensive treaty. Nuclear disarmament, in its many facets, not only figures on the agenda of the CD, but is presently the most relevant part of our schedule of activities.

We believe that over the years improvement in transparency on nuclear armaments has been achieved through bilateral and multilateral treaties on disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as through unilateral initiatives. Newspapers and specialized publications widely report figures on the existing arsenals, including nuclear arsenals. Publications such as the SIPRI Yearbook and the IISS Military Balance are widely consulted. They are invaluable for our work. But even more important are the figures officially declared by Member States themselves. We therefore welcome the reports on their arsenals made by some nuclear-weapon States this year to the CD during our debate on nuclear disarmament. We would encourage greater transparency by more countries on the armaments that have been reduced as well as on the remaining arsenals. In most cases more transparency on nuclear armaments and disarmament would enhance confidence and would have stabilizing effects.

Let me add another aspect which is relevant to our deliberations: I refer to the "Cooperative Threat Reduction" initiative, of which the G-8 Global Partnership is the most significant expression. In addition to being an instrument for WMD disarmament (and I recall the statements and the initiatives taken by my delegation in this respect), the Global Partnership is a relevant instrument for transparency in the field of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons.

Finally, we note that under agenda item 7, a delegation has asked to discuss the question of MANPADS. My country is aware of the destabilizing effect of such weapons in the hands of non-State actors and recalls the statements and positions on this issue by the European Union, OSCE, the G-8, as well as the small arms and light weapons Programme of Action and the Wassenaar Arrangement, and today we heard about the inclusion of MANPADS in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. We are therefore also ready to further discuss this issue in the Conference on Disarmament.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of Italy for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of the Russian Federation, Mr. Valery Loshchinin.

Mr. LOSHCHININ (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): Mr. President, first and foremost, I would like to express heartfelt thanks for the condolences and sympathy you voiced on behalf of the Conference and on your own behalf in connection with the tragic air disaster which caused the deaths of 170 persons. We are also grateful to the Deputy Foreign Minister of Argentina for his condolences, and also our colleagues.

(Mr. Loshchinin, Russian Federation)

Mr. President, we know that you are an experienced diplomat, with profound knowledge and a broad outlook, and this is why we are convinced that your mission will be successful as you preside over the work of the Conference, and we are prepared to assist and support you in any way we can.

To turn to the topic of our discussions today, transparency in armaments, we pay serious attention to this issue. We in Russia traditionally support measures to strengthen confidence in the field of armaments. Openness as a way of strengthening confidence and security is an important element of arms control at the global and regional levels. We have already achieved a great deal in this regard in the framework of bilateral, multilateral and global agreements for the limitation and reduction of both strategic and conventional arms. Obviously, a delicate balance is involved here. As a rule, transparency should serve the specific purposes of a given treaty or an agreement. It must not weaken the security of sovereign States, reduce the combat capabilities of their weaponry and become a channel of proliferation.

In the course of this year's focused thematic debates at the Conference on Disarmament we have already considered the issue of transparency in the field of nuclear weapons. We have also had a very fruitful discussion on transparency and confidence-building measures in the context of a future treaty on prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space, the use or threat of use of force against outer space objects. Today we would like to touch upon some aspects of transparency in armaments that the Russian delegation has not yet mentioned.

The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is an important institution for building confidence and security in international relations. We regularly provide it with data. We welcome the introduction into it of a subcategory of portable anti-missile systems, which are a very sensitive kind of weapon. We are satisfied with the outcome of the recently completed work of the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on issues related to the operation and development of the Register. The GGE has managed to prepare and adopt by consensus the draft report of the United Nations Secretary-General to the sixty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly. In 2003 and 2006 the Group of Governmental Experts set a good precedent for the development of the Register. And here it would be appropriate to express appreciation to the Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts Mr. Moritán, for his productive work.

The pragmatic tactic of taking small steps in this field is the most realistic and acceptable one in the current circumstances. We believe that the important objective of universalization should predominate in further development of the Register.

As regards deliveries of arms, the expansion of transparency must not of course jeopardize the national security of importing States or impede their ability to acquire the means to exercise their legitimate right to self-defence in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, nor should it put obstacles in the way of the legal export of arms. This, in particular, relates to the idea of a new international treaty on the arms trade. When we are dealing with arms transfers, we cannot be guided by criteria that may be arbitrarily construed.

(Mr. Loshchinin, Russian Federation)

Russia supports the leading role of the United Nations in the resolution of problems related to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons on the basis of the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on SALW. The question of increasing transparency in SALW shipments has attracted the keen interest of the international community. We do not consider the work of the conference on SALW held to review the United Nations Programme of Action to have been unproductive. Practically all the participating countries reaffirmed their commitment to the Programme of Action. No one spoke of the need to revise it. On the contrary, all the delegations highlighted the importance of joint efforts to combat the illicit trade in SALW, with emphasis on tackling specific problems at the national and regional levels. There is a need to continue putting forward specific measures to prevent the diversion of SALW from the legal trade into illegal circulation. Among such measures is a halt to the production of SALW without a licence or on the basis of expired licences.

Russia advocates the strengthening of regional cooperation in preventing the uncontrolled proliferation of SALW. Russia took an active part in the work of the special meeting of the OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation on SALW, held in Vienna on 17 May 2006. At this meeting a number of important proposals were considered concerning improvements in the registration and marking of SALW, as well as measures to prevent the illicit spread of portable anti-missile systems. In the context of anti-terrorist efforts we attach special importance to ensuring effective control over such systems. The provisions of instruments adopted at the regional level to reinforce export controls on such systems should be extended to other regions.

One of the achievements of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe is a reliable regime of transparency regulated by the Protocol on Notification and Exchange of Information. Russia provides annual information on five categories of conventional weapons, including detailed data on "flanks". We receive over 40 international inspections a year to confirm that our data are authentic. From the technical point of view everything is proceeding normally. However, the entry into force of the adapted CFE has been delayed for over a year, through no fault of ours. Russia has complied with all the CFE-related agreements which were reached at the signing of the Agreement on Adaptation in Istanbul in 1999. At the third conference to review the operation of the Treaty we reiterated that as a result of large-scale military and political changes, the Treaty had largely become obsolete and become detached from reality. Its basic restrictions, including group and zonal limits, have been eroded as a result of NATO expansion. The unconstructive position of some countries on the Russian proposals to ensure the entry into force of the adapted Treaty by the end of 2007 prevented the conference from adopting a final document. We do not consider the results of this conference to be satisfactory, nor do we consider satisfactory the general state of affairs with regard to the CFE Treaty, which was supposed to become the cornerstone of European security. The Russian delegation is continuing a thorough analysis of the outcome of the conference and the position of the NATO countries. From this analysis we shall draw conclusions as to the future line we will take on the implementation of the present Treaty and on dialogue with Western countries on the CFE Treaty issue.

An important role in ensuring transparency in the region is played by the Vienna Document 1999 on confidence-building and security-building measures, which provides

(Mr. Loshchinin, Russian Federation)

continuous transparency not only regarding OSCE member States' troop numbers, but also possible large-scale military exercises and troop relocations on the European continent. However, in order to further strengthen European security, many agreements relating to the military and political dimension of OSCE worked out at the Forum for Security Cooperation in the 1990s, including the Vienna Document, require urgent modernization.

Within the framework of the Open Skies Treaty - and transparency is the main subject of this treaty - practical cooperation with all States parties has been growing progressively and steadily. Technical problems which arise are resolved at the technical level. We look forward to further successful and constructive interaction among the parties in the implementation of this treaty.

We have an interest in the most effective possible operation of the Wassenaar Arrangement and the Hague Code of Conduct. In this connection it is of prime importance that the States participating in these arrangements strictly comply with their obligations. We consider one of the major tasks in the implementation of the Wassenaar Arrangement to be the prevention of destabilizing excessive accumulations of weapons. As for the Hague Code of Conduct, objectively it is necessary to transform it into a truly multilateral mechanism for transparency and confidence in the field of prevention of the proliferation of ballistic missiles, with a central role played by the United Nations, a mechanism which would unite us instead of establishing new dividing lines. Real transparency in such a sensitive sphere as that of missiles cannot be one-sided. It presupposes the participation of all States on an equal footing. We view the Code as a first step towards a legally binding multilateral universal treaty on this matter. And this was the purpose of our initiatives to adapt the Code so as to prompt the States with major missile programmes to join it.

We believe that the time has come to take a comprehensive look at the whole possible range of confidence-building measures in outer space. The practically unanimous support enjoyed at the United Nations General Assembly's sixtieth session by resolution 60/66, entitled "Transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities", which was proposed by Russia, demonstrated the high level of interest throughout the world in ensuring predictability in activities in outer space. We plan to put an updated draft of this resolution before the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly at its sixty-first session, and we urge support for it. We intend to circulate the draft resolution to delegations in the Conference on Disarmament in the near future.

In April this year the United Nations Disarmament Commission accomplished useful work on the issue of transparency and confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. As in 2003, a consensus on confidence-building measures was unfortunately not reached. Only a procedural report was adopted. However, this time no one said that the Commission was not necessary, and no one cast doubt upon the importance of multilateralism. We welcome the resumption of the Commission's endeavours and hope that in the coming two years of its substantive work we will be able to reach consensus on recommendations on transparency and confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons.

(Mr. Loshchinin, Russian Federation)

The Conference on Disarmament has accumulated a good deal of experience in working in depth on this important item. The Conference's Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency in Armaments, which functioned between 1992 and 1994, carried out good work. In 1998 the post of Special Coordinator on transparency was established. The discussions in 1998 demonstrated that transparency in armaments is a factor which helps to strengthen mutual trust, prevent destabilizing supplies of arms and create a favourable atmosphere for comprehensive disarmament. We share this approach.

The Russian delegation would be ready not to object to a consensus on the issue of the programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament on the basis of the latest version of the "five Ambassadors' proposal" contained in document CD/1693/Rev.1, including the appointment of a Special Coordinator on item 7 of the agenda. He could analyse national approaches to the role of the CD in this field. Among other things, the Conference could draw up recommendations and criteria to increase the practical effectiveness of transparency and confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. At the same time the Conference should not duplicate work already being carried out either at the regional or at the global level. Moreover, at this stage priority should in principle be given to the strict implementation of existing obligations and the universalization of the regimes in force, not to new agreements. Certainly, the most important thing now is quality, not quantity.

Our statement may have seemed long, but the topic is very important, and we considered it necessary to set out Russia's position on this vital problem in detail.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of the Russian Federation for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair, and I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of India, Ambassador Prasad.

Mr. PRASAD (India): Mr. President, allow me first, on behalf of my delegation, to congratulate you on assuming the Presidency of the Conference at an important moment in its cycle of work - the transition from one session to another - and to assure you of my delegation's full cooperation. We would like to take this opportunity to place on record our appreciation for your predecessor, Ambassador Camara of Senegal, for the excellent manner in which he guided the Conference. The structured discussions under his presidency on negative security assurances and a comprehensive programme of disarmament were most useful and productive. We would also like to warmly welcome in our midst Ambassador Roberto García Moritán, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Argentina, with whom I worked closely in the Conference two decades ago. We compliment him on his success in providing leadership to the Group of Governmental Experts convened to review the operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

With the current structured discussions on transparency in armaments, we will have concluded the process of discussions on all the issues on the agenda of the Conference. While these discussions have helped in distilling the different issues, enabled a better understanding of the priorities and concerns of member States and imparted productive momentum to the Conference, we hope they will also prove their utility in facilitating consensus on a programme of work, which has been the key objective of this exercise and which remains our principal future task.

(Mr. Prasad, India)

All States have the inherent right to self-defence, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter. Consequently, they have the right to acquire arms for their security, including through imports. The right of States to produce arms and engage in the arms trade is well recognized. Measures to enhance transparency in armaments must, therefore, be based on full respect for these rights. Also they should take into account the legitimate security needs of States and the principle of undiminished security at the lowest possible level of armaments.

The measures to promote transparency in armaments at the regional and subregional levels should take into account the specific characteristics of the region and strive to enhance the security of States and build confidence among them. Transparency also presupposes a modicum of peaceful intentions and stability; otherwise, it may only reveal vulnerability.

As with other confidence-building measures, measures to promote transparency in armaments should be voluntary and mutually agreed upon by all States; only then would they be able to secure the widest possible participation and effectively contribute to the process of confidence-building.

The international community is justifiably concerned over the increasing illicit trade in conventional arms, including small arms and light weapons, which has sustained conflicts between and within States, fuelled global terrorism and is linked to other transnational organized crime, including drug trafficking. The illicit transfer of arms to non-State actors, particularly terrorist groups, has emerged as a major threat to the security of States.

States have long recognized the need for transparency in armaments and generally agree that an enhanced level of transparency contributes greatly to confidence-building and security amongst them and could also help in the detection of arms transferred illegally. As a result, the United Nations General Assembly called upon all States to give high priority to eradicating illicit arms trafficking in all kinds of military weapons in its resolution 46/36 H, and, 10 years later, in 2001, United Nations Member States agreed on a programme of action on small arms and light weapons, aimed at preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

The establishment of a universal and non-discriminatory Register of Conventional Arms in 1992, following the adoption of resolution 46/36 L by the General Assembly in the preceding year, was an important step towards promoting transparency in armaments. The Register has enjoyed a relatively high level of participation. Since 1999, over 100 States have submitted reports each year, with peak participation by 126 States in 2001. We would like to seek even greater participation in the Register and encourage those States that do not as yet provide annual reports to do so in the future.

The United Nations Register has evolved through the triennial reviews carried out by Groups of Governmental Experts. Significantly, the GGE that concluded its latest review of the Register last month, in which an expert from India participated actively, recommended that States that wished to do so could report their transfer of small arms and light weapons to the Register on the basis of an optional standardized form. It also recommended a lower reporting threshold for warships and submarines.

(Mr. Prasad, India)

India has supported the United Nations Register as an important global confidence-building measure and has regularly submitted annual reports on the export and import of conventional arms in the recognized categories. We are committed to strengthening the norms of transparency in conventional armaments and consider the United Nations Register as part of the wider international effort to promote openness and transparency in all military matters.

Transparency in armaments has been understood so far in its limited context of reporting on the transfer of conventional arms; in fact, transparency in reporting on defence expenditure can also help in building confidence among States. We also believe that there should be adjustments to the categories of arms covered under the Register to make it more relevant to the security concerns of States. We supported the inclusion of MANPADS, under the category VII of the Register in 2003, and would like greater progress in terms of the inclusion of small arms and light weapons within the scope of the Register.

Although transparency is not an end in itself, an increased level of openness and transparency in armaments does enhance confidence, promote stability, help States exercise restraint, ease tensions and reinforce regional and international peace and security. It is, therefore, useful for the Conference to address this issue, in line with General Assembly resolution 60/226, which invites the Conference to consider continuing its work undertaken in the field of transparency in armaments.

At the end, I'd like to express my delegation's sincere condolences to the delegation of the Russian Federation on the tragic air crash.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of India for his statement and for his words of support addressed to the Chair. The next speaker on the list is Ambassador Brasack of Germany.

Mr. BRASACK (Germany): Mr. President, it is a pleasure for me to take the floor a second time under your distinguished chairmanship. At the beginning I would like to thank you for the introduction to this item this morning, which I think gave focus and perspective to our debate by mentioning the historical background of our proceedings today.

Secondly, like my colleagues, I would also like to express my appreciation for the statement by Ambassador García Moritán, the Chairman of the 2006 GGE on the United Nations Register, and I think he pointed to important results of this meeting. By the way, he mentioned also that in 2003, MANPADS were explicitly introduced to the concept of this Register, and that may be of importance for the debate that we are going to have tomorrow.

As my Japanese colleague said, I think these kinds of presentations after the conclusion of the GGE here in the CD are very useful also to foster the interactivity between the bodies of the so-called United Nations disarmament machinery. I think this is something we have been striving for for many years. So maybe this kind of practice of presenting the reports of outcomes of the GGE in CD could be continued in the future.

(Mr. Brasack, Germany)

Under this agenda item I have the pleasure to highlight the biennial resolution, United Nations General Assembly resolution, entitled “Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures”, which is also an important transparency tool in the view of this delegation.

This resolution is a German/Romanian biennial resolution. It is of long standing already. It was recently adopted by consensus in 2005 and will be a biennial resolution, as I mentioned, so it will be on the agenda in 2007 again.

Let me continue with some general remarks on the operational side of this resolution. Significant progress was recorded over this year in the level of participation by governments in the two global arms transparency instruments maintained and operated by the United Nations - the Register of Conventional Arms and the Standardized Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures, based on the respective Netherlands, Germany and Romania resolutions. Encouragingly, the number of new participants in the two arms transparency instruments continues to grow, registering a significant increase over the past years.

A promising upturn and a record number of submissions by governments has been recorded for the United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures. This standardized reporting format covers expenditure on personnel, operations and maintenance, procurement and construction, research and development. So far, more than 115 governments have taken an active part in the process, together constituting about 80 per cent of global military expenditure.

A sustained effort is being made by the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs to increase familiarity with the procedures of these instruments, with a view to encouraging greater and more consistent participation. A series of regional and subregional workshops, together with the assistance of interested governments, was conducted in 2004 and in 2005, focusing on the signatory States of the Nairobi Declaration, covering the Horn of Africa, East Africa and the Great Lakes region as well as States belonging to the Southern African Development Community, together with UNDDA, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and the United Kingdom.

The United Nations Standardized Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures was also discussed at a regional workshop covering the Member States belonging to the Pacific Islands Forum, held in Nadi, Fiji, from 18 to 20 August 2004, which was organized by the Department for Disarmament Affairs, and in a presentation by the Department in the plenary session of the Committee on Hemispheric Security of the Organization of American States, held in Washington, D.C. on 25 April 2005. These efforts helped to enhance and sustain the progress of the global transparency instruments towards fulfilling their respective confidence-building and arms restraint objectives. These efforts have continued steadily since then.

I take this opportunity to appeal to those who have only participated once, or just a few times, to participate on a consistent basis. Consistency alone will significantly raise the level of participation each year. Thereby it will contribute to the common goal of transparency.

(Mr. Brasack, Germany)

Coming back to the CD, this delegation is also deeply disappointed, as the United States delegation mentioned in the presentation this morning, that the issue of transparency in armaments has been on the back burner of the CD. It is well known that Germany supports the revised A5 proposal for a CD work programme which proposes the appointment of a Special Coordinator under agenda item 7, entitled "Transparency in armaments", to seek the views of its members on the most appropriate way to deal with the questions related to this item.

This constitutes a minimum in the view of this delegation. In this regard we are also happy to support the calls from the United States delegation, the Japanese delegation, but also the Russian delegation, to continue structured and meaningful in-depth discussion of this issue in this body.

More on a general note, an enhanced level of transparency in armaments contributes to increased confidence-building and enhances international stability and security. Transparency as a confidence-building and security-building measure is an important form of arms control, both at the global and regional levels. Transparency dispels mistrust in each other's national military policies and removes the possibility of surprise. It is a means for removing misperceptions concerning national military policies by rendering them more transparent and thus contributes to reducing their potential for military aggression. Exchanges of military information and inspections constitute important means to foster better mutual understanding of national military capabilities and activities and can thus contribute to reducing crisis potential. An effective exchange of information forms the basis for effective verification measures also.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Germany for his address, and now I give the floor to the last speaker on the list so far, Ambassador Landman of the Netherlands.

Mr. LANDMAN (Netherlands): I would also like to start out from my side to convey to our Russian colleague the Netherlands' profound condolences for the tragic air crash. Having travelled by air in the area extensively and on repeated occasions, I cannot help but also feel a personal loss.

Allow me to thank Vice-Minister García Moritán of Argentina for his clear and forceful presentation and for his indeed excellent chairmanship of the Group of Governmental Experts that has carried out the fifth review and further development of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

As some may know, as initiator of the Register, one of my predecessors here, Ambassador Wagenmakers, proposed and chaired at the time the negotiations bringing this Register about. The Netherlands particularly welcomes the positive results of the work done by the Group of Governmental Experts. The Group has been able to further extend the scope of the United Nations Register on three points, as has been described by its Chair and also some of the succeeding speakers.

(Mr. Landman, Netherlands)

First, the Group recommended that international transfers of conventional arms involving only United Nations Member States should be reported to the Register. With this approach and this recommendation, the Group paved the way for one important country to notify its relevant transactions to the Register again.

Second, the Group decided to extend the notification commitment regarding the sixth category of the Register. This will result in a wider information exchange on warships and submarines, now including all naval vessels under the threshold of 500 metric tons that are armed with missiles or torpedoes with a range of at least 25 kilometres.

Third, an optional standardized form for notification of transfers of small arms and light weapons was agreed upon by the Group. This will enable States willing to do so to report on these data as well. The Netherlands believes the adoption of the optional standardized form for small arms is an important agreement, because it makes notification on transfers of these kinds of weapons more accessible to States.

With these three main achievements, the Group further developed the overall aim of the United Nations Register, that is, effective transparency in armaments. This Group, which meets every three years, has now consistently proven to be able to make real progress, since in 2003, also under the able chairmanship of Ambassador García Moritán, it widened the scope on calibre and on MANPADS.

The Netherlands tables a United Nations General Assembly resolution on “Transparency in armaments” only in years relevant to the three-year cycle of the Group of Governmental Experts, that is to enable it to be installed and to receive its report. Since this year the Group has produced a report, you can expect a draft resolution on this subject soon. With it the Netherlands aims, as in earlier years, to gain wide United Nations support for the results of the Group of Governmental Experts, for the Secretary-General to adopt the report and to secure a mandate for the next Group of Governmental Experts to review and further develop the United Nations Register in 2009. This is a resolution on a process that really works.

Finally, the Netherlands will remain actively involved in activities related to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. Earlier regional United Nations workshops on the subject of the Register have generated increased participation in the Register. Therefore, the Netherlands plans to contribute to new regional workshops on transparency in armaments in the future.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of the Netherlands, and I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of China.

Mr. CHENG (China) (translated from Chinese): First of all, I too would like to convey to the Russian delegation my own delegation’s condolences in connection with the crash of the Russian airliner. Mr. President, I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference. The Chinese delegation stands ready to cooperate actively with you in your work.

(Mr. Cheng, China)

We welcome the discussions of the Conference on Disarmament on the question of transparency in armaments. We also commend Ambassador García Moritán, Deputy Foreign Minister of Argentina on his recent presentation of the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register. The Conference on Disarmament has already held a discussion on the issue of transparency in armaments, in the 1990s. At this point I would like to elaborate on China's position on the issue.

First of all, the purpose of transparency in armaments is to strengthen world peace, security and stability. Measures to promote transparency in armaments that are both appropriate and feasible will enhance understanding and trust among all States and help dispel unwarranted doubts. At the same time, the promotion of a new concept of security focusing on mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination, conducive to the emergence of a favourable international security environment, will also contribute to the development of transparency in armaments.

Second, in pursuit of transparency in armaments, the principle of undiminished security for all should be upheld. Under the United Nations Charter, all States enjoy an inherent right to individual and collective self-defence. Accordingly, all States have the right to possess and to maintain a military defence capability at a level commensurate with their legitimate self-defence needs. No transparency in armaments measures should be allowed to jeopardize or compromise the above-mentioned right.

Third, transparency in armaments measures should be both appropriate and feasible. Each country should determine its own transparency in armaments measures voluntarily, in the light of its own specific situation. Since different countries and regions have different political, military and geographical conditions, and their security environments also differ, there will also be differences between them in terms of their military strength and arms development. It would therefore be inappropriate to impose the same transparency levels and measures on all countries.

Fourth, the role of transparency in armaments must be seen in its true perspective. Transparency in armaments is not a panacea. Transparency in armaments may have a positive effect on the strengthening of international peace and security, but the two phenomena are by no means in a cause-and-effect relationship. Efforts from all sides are needed to enhance international peace, and transparency in armaments, on its own, will not necessarily lead to security. In the final analysis, transparency in armaments is merely a confidence-building measure.

The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms has been of some benefit in fostering confidence among States. China has participated actively and constructively in the work of the Register, contributing to the processes of setting it up, developing it and improving its operation. It is our hope that the Register will function smoothly and effectively and that its universal scope will be continuously enhanced in line with the purpose for which it was originally established.

China had been participating in the registration system under the United Nations Register since 1993. Because, however, a certain country insisted on entering its arms sales to the Taiwan

(Mr. Cheng, China)

province of China in the Register, in violation of the spirit of the relevant General Assembly resolution and at variance with the purpose and principles of the Register, China had no choice but to suspend its participation in the Register in 1998. The Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register recently agreed on a report to the United Nations General Assembly in which it confirmed that the Register is only intended to record arms transfers among United Nations Member States. The country in question has also indicated that, as of next year, it will stop entering its arms sales to the Taiwan province of China in the Register, in accordance with the General Assembly resolution. It is our hope that this undertaking will be implemented at the earliest possible date so that the obstacle to China's reintegration in the work of the Register can be removed.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of China for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

This concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? That does not seem to be the case.

In the outline of proposed activities under Slovakia's presidency, we have envisaged the opportunity to convene an informal plenary meeting to continue consideration of this agenda item. We have not received any requests from the delegations to convene such a meeting. May I ask once again whether this is the feeling among the delegations? In that case, the next plenary meeting will be held tomorrow, Thursday, 24 August, at 10 a.m. At that meeting the Conference will benefit from the presentation of the representative of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Dr. Tariq Rauf, on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. The meeting will be followed by an informal plenary meeting during which delegations will have an opportunity to ask questions and make comments on that presentation. With this I conclude this meeting.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.