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First Committee

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Official Records

President: Mr. De Alba (Mexico)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda items 57 to 72 (continued)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Kazykhanov (Kazakhstan): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the high office of Chairman of the First Committee and to express my confidence that, under your able stewardship, substantive progress will be made in addressing important issues on the agenda of this Committee.

I would also like to express my appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Nobuyasu Abe for his introductory remarks made at the opening meeting here.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction remains one of the most serious challenges to global security. Kazakhstan fully shares those concerns and calls for a strengthened and universal application of the existing regimes of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

As one of the few States that have voluntarily given up their nuclear weapons, Kazakhstan is concerned by the current status of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). That important Treaty has been seriously eroded because of destructive actions on the part of a number of known States. We should recognize that the non-proliferation regime faces a formidable threat and that there is a real

possibility of the uncontrolled spread of weapons of mass destruction and, most importantly, of terrorists getting hold of them.

The outcomes of the 2005 Review Conference should reconfirm that the NPT continues to be a key and effective instrument in halting both the vertical and the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons and a point of departure for nuclear disarmament. Kazakhstan is actively involved in the negotiations on a treaty establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. The initiative of the Central Asian States to establish such a zone in the region is an important contribution by those States to the efforts to achieve their declared objectives.

As the site of the former Semipalatinsk nuclear-testing ground, my country has first-hand knowledge of the horrendous effects of nuclear testing. We call for an early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and urge the Governments of those States that have not yet ratified that instrument to display political will and genuine commitment to nuclear disarmament.

Kazakhstan is making a further practical contribution to the strengthening of the CTBT verification regime. In September 2004, Kazakhstan signed a facility agreement with the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization that entered into force upon signature.

Now, under the terms of the CTBT, Kazakhstan hosts one primary seismic station, one auxiliary

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seismic station and one infrasound station. In addition, Kazakhstan has since 2002 been a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group — yet another reaffirmation of its firm commitment to carrying out its nuclear activities in full compliance with internationally accepted rules and standards.

Kazakhstan attaches great importance to the full implementation of IAEA safeguards and to the strengthening of its capacity. The Agency's verification mechanism provides a guarantee against the diversion of nuclear material from a declared peaceful use to military purposes and illicit nuclear activity. To strengthen those safeguards, all States should sign an Additional Protocol with the IAEA. Kazakhstan has already signed that Additional Protocol.

We believe that the negotiation process within the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva should be reactivated. In our view, the potential of that important forum is far from being tapped to its full extent.

The disarmament process should be carried out within the framework of legally binding arrangements. In that regard, Kazakhstan remains convinced that it is necessary to launch negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty and for the Conference on Disarmament to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to negotiate a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

The achievements made in the exploration of outer space should serve only the peaceful purposes of humankind. It is vitally important to prevent the militarization of outer space, which could have irreversible consequences. Negotiations on the issue of the prevention of an arms race in outer space should start as soon as possible.

In line with its consistent policy in the area of non-proliferation, in 2000 Kazakhstan applied for membership in the Missile Control Technology Regime (MCTR) and submitted all the required documentation. We expect that the decision on our admission to the MCTR will be made shortly. Kazakhstan also wishes to express its strong interest in joining the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction and hopes for a fruitful cooperation with the Partnership States in the implementation of the Action Plan on non-proliferation.

Kazakhstan strongly supports Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In view of current threats to global security, we are convinced that all States should take measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction or their components.

We find it very timely that the resolution calls on States to take measures to strengthen controls over the manufacturing, storage and export of sensitive materials and technologies. Kazakhstan will submit shortly a national report on the implementation of that resolution.

As a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, Kazakhstan is strongly committed to its obligations under that instrument. We also welcome the efforts by the States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention to develop agreed mechanisms for its strengthening.

It is encouraging to note that, over the last two or three years, the United Nations has considerably stepped up its efforts to prevent the illicit trade in conventional weapons. Kazakhstan welcomes all these steps and attaches great importance to the consistent implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, as discussed at a regional conference in Almaty in March 2004.

I wish to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Secretariat, and in particular to the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, for their support of that Conference, which has made a tangible contribution to regional and international endeavours to combat the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons.

Kazakhstan shares the international concern at the ongoing practice of using landmines, which indiscriminately maim and kill thousands of people every year. Kazakhstan does not produce anti-personnel landmines, strictly observes the rules on their stockpiling, bans the export and transit of landmines and currently is undertaking its national procedures to join international treaties in that area.

By supporting United Nations efforts to strengthen the role of regional arrangements in the area of security, Kazakhstan is making a tangible contribution to efforts to strengthen regional stability

and security in Asia. Kazakhstan's initiative regarding the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) is an effective tool designed to strengthen confidence and security in Asia.

The draft catalogue of confidence-building measures and the draft rules of procedure have already been agreed and are expected to be adopted at a ministerial meeting of the CICA countries, scheduled to be held on 22 October in Almaty. The adoption of the catalogue will create a unique document encompassing a range of measures in the military, political, economic and environmental areas designed to strengthen security and confidence in Asia.

Kazakhstan reaffirms its strong commitment to integration and multilateral cooperation at the regional level. Such institutions as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Eurasian Economic Community and the Central Asian Cooperation Organization play an ever-increasing role in efforts to strengthen security, develop economic cooperation and create conditions for the prosperity of our vast region.

Our country also supports the strengthening of the capacity of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as a major and influential international organization. A year ago the CIS member States agreed on measures to tighten accounting, storage and control rules with respect to Man-Portable Air-Defense Systems (MANPADS).

Kazakhstan welcomes and supports the efforts made by member States at the previous session of the General Assembly to reform and rationalize the work of the First Committee. At the same time, we consider it necessary to underline the fact that such reforms should be carefully calibrated and balanced. We also believe that it is important to ensure that the debate on the issue does not produce the opposite effect and lead to a slowdown in, or the diminished efficiency of, the work of the Committee.

Finally, I would like once again to assure the Committee that we will fully support all its efforts to adopt decisions which will strengthen the non-proliferation regime and promote security at the regional and global levels.

My delegation stands ready, as it has at previous sessions, to work together with our colleagues to achieve our common goals.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to acknowledge the presence at this meeting of the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Ordzhonikidze, who is also Director-General of the United Nations Office in Geneva.

Mr. Scherba (Ukraine): First of all I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to you, Ambassador De Alba, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Committee. I am confident that your diplomatic skills will lead our deliberations to a successful outcome. In that regard, you may be assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation. I would also like to express my appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Nobuyasu Abe and to Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament.

Trends currently seen in the field of international security have and will have implications for the prospects of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. In light of the growing and unpredictable threat posed by terrorists, efforts to curb the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and their delivery systems have acquired additional importance. At the same time, some specific steps should be taken to ensure the universality of existing international treaties in the field of WMD non-proliferation and disarmament, as well as strict compliance by all States parties with their provisions. In that connection, Ukraine welcomes the historic decision by the Libyan leadership to abandon programmes for the development of WMDs and to accede to the major international treaties in that field.

The Ukraine highly appreciates the more active involvement of the Security Council in addressing the threat of WMD proliferation through its adoption of resolution 1540 (2004). We strongly support the objectives of that resolution and believe that implementation of its provisions will reduce the threat in question.

In that connection, I cannot but mention the progress made in the activities undertaken within the Proliferation Security Initiative. I have the privilege of calling attention to the fact that this year marks the tenth anniversary of Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). By acceding to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State, Ukraine significantly facilitated the enhancement of the international non-proliferation regime and of global

security, and created favourable conditions for the indefinite extension of the Treaty. Ukraine has ensured the reduction of all nuclear weapons inherited from the former Soviet Union. At the same time, as part of Ukraine's obligations under the first Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I), we still must eliminate 5,000 tons of solid propellant from SS-24 intercontinental ballistic missiles. Despite the fact that Ukraine recently adopted a State support programme for the disposal of that considerable amount of dangerous material, there is an urgent need for additional financing by donor countries. In that connection, we appeal to the international community to find the ways and means to provide assistance for that demilitarization project, which is considered to be an integral part of nuclear disarmament in Ukraine.

Given the crucial contribution of the NPT to the preservation of international peace and security, we believe it is particularly important to promote the universality of the Treaty and to strengthen its viability through strict implementation of all its provisions by all member States. Ukraine takes note of the work done at the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 NPT Review Conference, held this spring, and calls on all States to make all necessary efforts to reach a successful outcome for the Conference.

It is with regret that we note the lack of progress made in ensuring the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Ukraine strongly urges those States that still remain outside the Treaty to ratify or accede to it at an early date.

The present uncertain security environment in the world increases the importance of strengthening the capacity of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the field of nuclear non-proliferation. That can be accomplished through the faithful and universal application of comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols. As of today, the preparatory activities for the ratification of the protocol signed by Ukraine in 2000 have been completed, and ratification is expected very soon. Ukraine believes that legally binding security assurance by the nuclear-weapon States to non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT will significantly strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime by eliminating plausible incentives for pursuing nuclear capabilities. In that connection, the reaffirmation by many States of their support for the commencement of negotiations on a fissile material

cut-off treaty is also encouraging. The establishment of the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, launched at the Group of Eight Kananaskis Summit, was an important contribution to enhancing multilateral non-proliferation efforts. Since Ukraine attaches great importance to the implementation of the Kananaskis initiative, we appreciate the recently adopted decision on Ukraine's participation in it.

Ensuring proper implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention is one of the key priorities of Ukraine. We are now preparing for the multilateral training exercises, which are to take place in Ukraine in 2005. Ukraine calls on all countries that have not yet ratified or signed the Convention to do so as soon as possible.

Ukraine fully supports the purposes of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and strictly complies with its obligations under the BWC. It is time to make decisive efforts to develop an appropriate verification mechanism for the BWC.

The gravity of the problem of small arms and light weapons is clearly illustrated by the fact that those weapons cause more than 90 per cent of all casualties in armed conflict. As part of our efforts to fulfil the Programme of Action adopted at the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, Ukraine, with assistance provided through the NATO Partnership for Peace Trust Fund, expects to destroy 1.5 million small arms and light weapons and 133,000 tons of surplus ammunition.

Ukraine attaches great importance to urgently solving the numerous problems associated with the widescale use of landmines. We are committed to the goals of the mine ban Treaty. Ukraine is currently in the process of completing the preparatory activities necessary for the ratification of that instrument. Ukraine stands for enhanced consideration of the question of providing additional technical and financial assistance not only for mine clearance, but also for the destruction of stockpiles. In that connection, I would like to stress that Ukraine still faces the problem of destroying the stockpiles of 6 million PFM-type anti-personnel landmines. In view of that, we call upon the international community to provide the relevant assistance. The first Review Conference of States parties to the mine ban Treaty, which will take place in

Nairobi in November of this year, will be an opportunity for States to renew their commitment to a world free of anti-personnel mines.

For the First Committee to fulfil its mandate in a changing security environment, it is urgently necessary that the Committee be strengthened. Ukraine is committed to the reform of the First Committee, and we are ready to work closely with the Chair and with other delegations to intensify our deliberations on that issue.

We highly appreciate the efforts of the Department for Disarmament Affairs with regard to holding meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts on the relationship between disarmament and development and of the Panel of Governmental Experts on the Issue of Missiles in All its Aspects. We commend the successful outcome of the sessions of the Group on the relationship between disarmament and development. However, the absence of consensus observed at the meetings of the Group on missiles points to the fact that that issue will require our utmost attention in the future. Proliferation of missiles destabilizes regional and global security. From that perspective, the Hague Code of Conduct against ballistic missile proliferation has to be firmly established as a universal and viable confidence-building measure.

Before concluding, my delegation wishes to pay the highest tribute to the Department for Disarmament Affairs, under the effective leadership of Under-Secretary-General Nobuyasu Abe. We are confident that, with Mr. Abe's guidance, the Department will continue to play a supportive role in the service of States Members of the Organization.

Mrs. Fernando (Sri Lanka): Mr. Chairman, my dear colleague from Geneva, I extend my delegation's sincere felicitations to you. You will, of course, have our fullest support in carrying your plans to reinvigorate the work of the First Committee to a productive conclusion.

We also commend Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, and the officials of his department both in New York and in Geneva for their invaluable dedication to the cause of disarmament despite their limited resources and at a time when key multilateral institutions are under stress.

The First Committee is meeting once again at a time when the international security situation is in crisis. With the tragic events of September in Russia, the spectre of international terrorism has returned to haunt us. The horrific events of Beslan — where hundreds of innocent children were deliberately targeted on a day intended to bring joy to their families — has resulted in universal condemnation of all forms and manifestations of terrorism and has evoked our greater solidarity to take whatever action is required to eradicate that menace.

It was assumed for a long time that the security of a nation-State could best be assured by a weapon-based system and reliance on ever-greater technological advances. Yet, we have in recent times seen that the most impressive arsenals could not deter terrorists or non-State actors who appear to have the ability to create the means of mass destruction out of the small arms and light weapons they are able to lay their hands on. The recurrence of such tragedies — aimed at the most militarily powerful of nation-States — underlines the need for us to reflect deeply on the issues of security and the urgent need to work together to consolidate the international legal regime, using all the branches of the United Nations system, strengthening international legal norms and standards and enabling judicial, security and intelligence cooperation across borders, while also addressing issues of the root causes of terror, where appropriate.

Our hopes for a more peaceful and secure world in the post-cold war era have yet to be realized. The Millennium Declaration, adopted at the turn of the century by our heads of State, underlined the common objectives of peace and security. It called for a reduction in armaments and increased cooperation to achieve the common desire of mankind for global common security, based on collective reliance at the national, regional and international levels. We recognize that the cessation of the nuclear arms race between the United States and Russia has resulted in the reduction of nuclear weapons and military stockpiles. Yet at the same time we see that the international disarmament and arms control treaty system is challenged: treaties and negotiated agreements are being contested and the obligations undertaken with a spirit of purpose are being revoked. It seems that the very foundation of rule-based international conduct is now being challenged.

Those developments have inevitably contributed to the situation of paralysis in the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission and do not bode well for the achievement of international peace and security. In the Conference on Disarmament, my delegation has consistently stressed that the approach of some countries — to de-link measures for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons from the question of nuclear disarmament — is a matter of serious concern. In our view, such an approach is fraught with danger, contributing to the crisis of confidence that is particularly untenable in these months leading up to the fifth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as evidenced by the failure of the third session of the Preparatory Committee even to agree on an agenda and substantive recommendations. We express our confidence in the President-designate of the 2005 Review Conference, Ambassador Sergio Duarte, as he commences the challenging task of getting agreement on those issues before the start of the Review Conference in May.

The NPT remains the cornerstone of multilateral efforts to prevent both horizontal and vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons. Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are two faces of the same coin, and our efforts must be directed towards achieving both of those objectives, which are complementary and mutually reinforcing, while also taking into consideration the right of developing countries to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

The Conference on Disarmament, which is the only multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament, still remains at an impasse. We reiterate that agreement on a programme of work remains our highest priority. The series of informal plenary meetings, shepherded by successive Presidents of the Conference from the Group of 21 group this year, enabled the Conference to take some steps towards improving its functioning. Exchanges of views proved useful in exploring positions with regard to the traditional agenda, as well as in considering the persistent threats and challenges posed in new forms of terrorism, while all delegations stressed the need to strengthen compliance with arms control and disarmament agreements.

We were pleased to note that the majority of delegations expressed support for the re-establishment of an ad hoc Conference on Disarmament committee on the prevention of an arms race in outer space during

the open-ended informal consultations and the informal plenary meetings this year. Over the last several years, my delegation, together with the delegation of Egypt, has introduced a draft resolution in the First Committee on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, calling for the earliest possible resumption of stalled negotiations on this item. The increased support for our draft resolution over the years is a significant development. It may be that the amazing, unprecedented photographs beamed across television screens around the world from the Mars Rovers, Opportunity and Spirit have once again rekindled in our hearts and minds the wonder of space exploration and have strengthened popular resolve to keep the pristine world of space a peaceful arena for all time for all the peoples of the world; the annual presentation of a draft resolution on that subject in the First Committee and the almost universal endorsement of its principles, have, we believe, had the salutary effect of according to those objectives the status of customary law.

Our approach to disarmament is founded on our belief in multilateralism, which most particularly serves the interest of small States. It is our belief that positive steps, however small, can have an incremental effect. In that context, we are pleased to announce that on 24 September 2004 The Honourable Lakshman Kadirgamar, Minister for Foreign Affairs, deposited the formal instrument of Sri Lanka's accession to the United Nations Conference on Prohibitions or Restrictions of Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which May Be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. As it acceded to that Convention, Sri Lanka also became a party to its Amended Protocol II and to Protocols III and IV.

Furthermore, at the first Review Conference of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention on landmines, to be held in Nairobi, Sri Lanka will be submitting a report, on a voluntary basis, under article 7 of the Convention.

The foregoing measures are a reiteration of Sri Lanka's unwavering commitment to the further promotion of humanitarian law and its continued constructive engagement with the international community on the issue of landmines. Since the signing of the ceasefire agreement between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in February 2002, the Government of Sri Lanka has embarked on a comprehensive humanitarian mine-action programme with the broad objective of

making Sri Lanka a mine-free country by the year 2006.

The Sri Lanka Army was the first to engage in the country's demining activities, and it was the major force in those activities. As a result of ongoing mine action programmes, the number of mine-related incidents has dropped by half and hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons have been resettled. These measures extend protection both to the civilian population and to United Nations and other humanitarian missions operating in conflict-affected areas. We also welcome the efforts made by the international community to persuade non-State parties to sign the Deed of Commitment, which would facilitate Sri Lanka's accession to the Ottawa Convention.

It must also be mentioned that, although much attention is devoted today to the dangers of weapons of mass destruction and their proliferation, it is small arms and light weapons that now threaten most people in conflict and war zones. We remain closely engaged in the international effort to combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, as adopted at the United Nations Conference in 2001 and at follow-up meetings, including the most recent work on tracing and marking. We agree that supplies of small arms and light weapons should be limited to Governments or duly authorized entities and that arms transfers must be under national, regional and international control in order to prevent their illicit transfer into the hands of terrorists.

It will be recalled that this year the Conference on Disarmament also heard the good news from Ambassador Jaap Ramaker of the Netherlands that, with 172 signatures, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is reaching universality, with the number of ratifications continuing to grow despite the challenges faced. Similarly, we welcome the increasing number of ratifications of the Chemical Weapons Convention and of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

We will be speaking later on the issue of improving the effectiveness of the First Committee's working methods. We have tried to keep the present statement as brief as possible in order to comply with the Chairman's exhortations to the Committee.

Mr. Koh (Singapore): Please allow me to join other speakers in congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, and the other members of the Bureau on your election.

We assure you that our delegation will give you our fullest support in ensuring a smooth and productive session. We would also like to express our appreciation to the previous Chairman, Ambassador Jarmo Sareva of Finland, for his good work during the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

In some ways, we are living in the best of times, with advances in technology and the spread of globalization bringing about many positive changes, including economic growth and higher standards of living for many countries. In some ways, this is also the worst of times, as the same driving forces are bringing about new threats and vulnerabilities that affect everyone, rich or poor, strong or weak.

The First Committee provides a multilateral forum in which to deal with issues concerning international peace and security and disarmament. Today, I would like to look at the work of the First Committee as it relates to counter-terrorism. Singapore sees terrorism as one of the most serious threats to the world we live in. Even after the many measures undertaken by the world community in the aftermath of the horrific attacks by the terrorists on 11 September 2001, the world has hardly become a safer place. Recently, the world stood by helplessly as terrorists killed more than 330 people — more than half of them children — in cold blood in a school in Beslan. That was after the loss of hundreds of civilian lives in the terrorist attacks on the idyllic tourist resort of Bali and on the bustling city of Madrid. There have also been terrorist attacks elsewhere too numerous to mention.

It is a certainty that we will have to live with the threat of terrorism for some time to come. The moral freefall and the lack of restraint suggest that the scale of violence inflicted by terrorism has no boundaries. The threat of terrorism is further amplified by the risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It is indeed worrying that there is growing evidence that terrorists seek to obtain chemical, biological and radiological weapons.

As a small country, Singapore sees the prevention of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) as in its vital security interests. We are keenly aware of the danger posed by terrorists' resorting to the use of such weapons. A single chemical or biological attack would have catastrophic effects on the entire nation. A nuclear attack would also mean the physical end of Singapore. That is not theoretical or far-fetched:

there is a finality in such a scenario, as Singapore could be entirely wiped out in one single attack.

We are determined to do everything possible to safeguard Singapore's security. In the fight against terrorism and in curbing the proliferation of WMDs, Singapore has enacted relevant laws and regulations. We have also strengthened our export control regimes. We are working to strengthen counter-terrorism measures in multilateral forums such as Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council, the Association of South-East Asian Nations Regional Forum and the International Maritime Organization.

Singapore firmly supports international efforts to counter WMD proliferation, including the Proliferation Security Initiative, which is one of the practical means to keep WMDs and related substances out of the hands of terrorist groups. That is in line with Singapore's forward-looking stance against WMD proliferation and against global and regional terrorism.

Apart from the relatively new threat of international terrorism, regional conflicts continue to ravage the lives of people in many parts of the world. Many of those conflicts are intra-State rather than inter-State in nature. They are fuelled by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, with thousands of lives lost every year and many more thousands of people displaced from their homes. Such conflicts inevitably lead to the destruction of viable economies, which result in failed States and the destabilization of the surrounding region. That is fertile breeding ground for extremism and terrorism. In that regard, Singapore supports United Nations efforts aimed at enhancing international cooperation aimed at preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Singapore sees the issues of disarmament, non-proliferation and terrorism as interrelated. The United Nations will need to continue to be the key player with regard to those issues, especially disarmament and non-proliferation. In that regard, Singapore appeals to all parties to adopt flexible positions in order to resolve their differences so that real progress can be made in these areas. Singapore supports Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which reaffirms that the proliferation of WMDs is a threat to international peace and stability. We also call for universal adherence to multilateral arms control and non-proliferation treaties such as the Treaty on the Non-

Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

Every year, we gather here to deliberate on the agenda items of the First Committee, to find ways to advance the things we believe in. Every year, scores of draft resolutions are adopted to deal with issues of great concern to us. But, at the end of the day, we also have to ask ourselves what those resolutions have achieved, other than reflecting the well-known positions of various delegations. After all the hard work that we do to produce those draft resolutions, have they been implemented and acted upon? Have they led to tangible results? To an outside observer, it might seem as if we are merely going through the motions year after year, with few concrete results.

The threats faced by the world are serious and need to be urgently addressed. The longer we take to tackle the issues, the higher the costs will become. There have been many calls for reform and revitalization of the United Nations, including of the work of the First Committee. As with most United Nations issues, the key ingredient of success is political will: the political will to engage in some give and take, to exercise greater flexibility in one's position and to have deeper understanding of others' constraints. It is heartening to see that the Committee has decided to adopt many of the measures discussed at the previous session in order to improve the efficiency of our meetings. I hope that, as emphasized by the Chairman in his opening remarks a few days ago, those measures will be equally effective in helping us to establish the foundations for a durable and comprehensive solution to the security challenges we face.

The Chinese expression for crisis consists of two words: "danger" and "opportunity". The Chinese believe that opportunity exists where danger lurks. Perhaps the dangerous world in which we live today provides a golden opportunity for us, collectively, to shape the world to the ideals of the United Nations that we all cherish.

Mr. Bouchaara (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): I should like first of all to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Committee and to assure you of the full support of the delegation of Morocco as you carry out your mission. I would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

I would also like to take this opportunity to extend, on behalf of the delegation of Morocco, my sincere condolences to our friends and colleagues from the delegation of Egypt for the attack against Taba that took place yesterday. We express our deep sympathies to our Egyptian friends at this painful time. We also offer our condolences to the families of nationals of other countries affected by those tragic events.

Has the First Committee been able to adapt to the changes that have taken place on the international scene since the end of the cold war? We must recognize that nature of our debates, the way in which the First Committee functions and the fault lines of our discussions reflect a world that no longer exists. Reform is required. Such reform must take into account the nature of the mandate of the First Committee, which deals with both disarmament and international security issues. Those two aspects are inextricably linked. The Moroccan delegation is ready to participate constructively in any initiative designed to rationalize and modernize the working methods of the First Committee to allow it to fully play its role.

This year, 2004, has been, in many ways, a year of missed opportunities for disarmament and non-proliferation. The Disarmament. The Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has not been able to adopt the agenda for the 2005 Conference, and the Panel of Governmental Experts on the Issue of Missiles in All its Aspects has not succeeded in adopting its report by consensus.

Those difficulties, however, should not discourage us. There are reasons for satisfaction in other areas. The Conference on Disarmament has still not begun the negotiating process, but, under the chairmanship of Morocco it has succeeded in holding an initial exchange of views on new issues linked to the conference's agenda. These are new challenges for the international community. Likewise, the successful launch of negotiations on an international instrument for marking and tracing small arms must be continued, with a view to its conclusion — we hope — in June 2005. Finally, the growing number of States — 115 to date — that have subscribed to the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation attests to the will of the international community to act collectively on an issue that is of great importance for international security.

The risk of nuclear, chemical, biological or radiological terrorism must not be underestimated. That risk is difficult to assess, but it cannot be ignored. These new challenges must be properly addressed. It is important for international instruments to be respected. It is also crucial for them to be strengthened to take into account the seriousness of these new threats. The Kingdom of Morocco, as a State party to the NPT, would like to recall the critical importance of that Treaty for international peace and security. It is important to preserve and to strengthen that international instrument, which continues to be a cornerstone of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. My country would like once again to advocate universal accession to the Treaty.

Morocco continues to be concerned about the situation in the Middle East. It is regrettable that the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East is encountering opposition from Israel, which is still not a party to the NPT and refuses to subject its nuclear facilities to comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards.

It is important not only that the universality of the NPT be achieved, but also that the nuclear Powers respect their commitments, in particular regarding nuclear disarmament. For their part, the non-nuclear-weapon States must fully respect their commitments on nuclear non-proliferation. In that context, the Kingdom of Morocco signed, on 22 September 2004, an IAEA Additional Protocol. The signing of that Protocol attests to Morocco's commitment to supporting international efforts to combat nuclear proliferation. Morocco would also like to reiterate the importance of the rapid entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) — an essential instrument for international peace and security.

We would like once again to express our support for the beginning of negotiations on the conclusion of a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty.

At the regional level, peace and security in the Mediterranean region will require a reduction in disparities between the northern and southern parts of that region. That alone can promote shared prosperity and sustainable development in our region. That will also require a united Maghreb that demonstrates solidarity and respect for the territorial integrity of the sovereignty of its member States.

In some ways, 2004 will certainly be seen as a year of missed opportunities. 2005 will be marked by a number of important events: the NPT Review Conference; the conclusion of an international instrument on marking and tracing of small arms; the biennial follow-up meeting of the 2001 United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects; and the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations. Those important events will provide opportunities for a new impetus for multilateral disarmament. It will be up to us, collectively, to meet the expectation of the international community.

Mrs. Núñez de Odremán (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like, on behalf of the Venezuelan delegation, to express our sincere congratulations to you, Sir, the representative of a friendly country member of the Latin American and Caribbean Group, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee at the fifty-ninth session. We offer you our full cooperation and wish you every success as you carry out your work.

My delegation supports the statement made by the representative of Brazil on behalf of the Rio Group. However, we would also like to raise a few specific disarmament issues that are of interest to the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Venezuela has always supported multilateralism, particularly the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament and international security. We attach the utmost importance to issues such as the attainment of general and complete nuclear disarmament; the complete prohibition of the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons and on their destruction; the non-proliferation and elimination of weapons of mass destruction; the eradication of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects; the elimination of anti-personnel landmines; and the peaceful uses of outer space.

Venezuela is a peace-loving country, as can be seen in its unwavering support for subregional, regional, hemispheric and international initiatives to promote disarmament and security. It believes that the concept of security at both the national and global levels is necessarily linked to respect for the human rights and social well-being of each of the inhabitants of the States that make up the international community.

Our international action in the field of disarmament and security is in line with foreign policy guidelines contained in the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the organic law on the security and defence of the nation, and the economic and social development plan 2001-2007. Among those guidelines, we emphasize the promotion of a multipolar world, the promotion of cooperation with developing countries, the encouragement of regional confidence and security, and the implementation of a comprehensive hemispheric security regime characterized by a multidimensional approach. In that regard, we would stress the following concrete actions.

With respect to regional security, Venezuela joined in the Quito Declaration on the Establishment and Development of an Andean Peace Zone, adopted at the Fifteenth Andean Presidential Council in July 2004.

As regards nuclear disarmament, in September 2003 we completed the installation in Venezuela of two antennas, provided by the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), that are integrated into a global monitoring network of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Venezuela also cooperated in convening the CTBTO's first regional seminar for training station operators and personnel for the data centres, held in Caracas in June 2004. A regional meeting of national counterparts in technical cooperation projects with the IAEA for the 2004-2006 cycle is to be held on Margarita Island this year.

With respect to chemical weapons, between November 2003 and May 2004 the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Venezuela coordinated inter-institutional meetings to analyse the draft decree for the establishment of a national authority for the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which is now under consideration by the Venezuelan Attorney General. In June 2004, various industrial declarations were filed with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague in connection with the import and export of certain chemicals. Declarations were also filed regarding chemical substance production facilities from 1999 to 2003.

As to the fight against the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons, we are concerned, as the

Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs noted, about the increase and illegal flow of those weapons, which have become weapons of mass destruction. In July 2004, Venezuela drafted a report on its implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We also reported that, between March 2003 and July 2004, the Ministry of Defence eliminated 63,326 illegally held or used light weapons and, in April 2004, suspended the import of firearms in order to update its arms registry and control system.

As for anti-personnel landmines, Venezuela supports the international community's efforts to destroy and eradicate those weapons. In September 2003, we completed the destruction of 47,189 anti-personnel landmines in the arsenals of the national armed forces. This year, we have decided to reduce to 1,000 the number of mines maintained for training. In the same vein, our country participated in the Americas Regional Mine Action Conference, held in Quito, Ecuador, in August 2004.

With respect to disarmament and international humanitarian law, in October 2003 the Ministry for Foreign Affairs authorized national measures to be taken to ensure Venezuela's adherence to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects and its Protocols I, II and III. In April 2004, we completed a draft decree on the establishment of the Venezuelan aerospace agency and we hope that our country can thereby avail itself of the peaceful uses of outer space. We maintain our position that outer space should be declared the common heritage of humankind.

Peace and security are universal values that every State is obliged to guarantee. We support the work of the disarmament machinery and especially its principal forums, such as the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission, and urge an end to the current stalemate that would permit genuine deliberations on finding a multilateral consensus formula to support general and complete disarmament in all its aspects.

In conclusion, Venezuela continues to proclaim its vocation for peace and to participate actively in the field of disarmament and security to promote a

multipolar world and to act within the United Nations system to establish a world that is more just, peaceful and safe.

Mr. Rastam (Malaysia): I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of this Committee. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election. I extend my sincere appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Jarmo Sareva of Finland, for the outstanding manner in which he conducted the work of the Committee during the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

Developments in the field of disarmament and international security in 2004 can best be described as a combination of progress, stagnation and setbacks. The Secretary-General has provided us with an excellent assessment of the state of affairs in multilateral disarmament efforts over the past year in his report on the work of the Organization, as contained in document A/59/1. He has stated, *inter alia*, that there remain several challenges which, if left unchecked, could undermine international peace and security and increase the risk of new instances of unilateral or pre-emptive use of force. Those include

“the slow pace of disarmament, violations of non-proliferation commitments, evidence of a clandestine nuclear network and the threat of terrorism”. (*A/59/1, para. 69*)

My delegation concurs with the Secretary-General.

It is crucial that favourable conditions be created for the further advancement of the global disarmament process. In that connection, all States should strictly abide by the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. Any action that ignores those provisions and that is incompatible with the principles of international law would adversely affect genuine and serious efforts in the field of disarmament. Malaysia underscores the vital importance of multilateralism and multilaterally-agreed solutions in addressing disarmament and international security issues.

As the current Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Malaysia continues to fully subscribe to the long-held principled position of NAM in the field of disarmament and international security. The pronouncements concerning that question made by the heads of State or Government of NAM at their thirteenth summit in Kuala Lumpur in February 2003,

and most recently reiterated by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of NAM at their fourteenth ministerial conference in Durban on 19 August 2004, shall remain the road map for Malaysia and the member countries of NAM. The Non-Aligned Movement will continue to be at the forefront of the global campaign for the total elimination of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons.

In the course of the year, we have witnessed the continued failure of the Conference on Disarmament to launch any substantive work. We hope that the Conference on Disarmament will be able to resume without delay its important role of negotiating new arms control and disarmament agreements, with an emphasis on the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. Similarly, the failure of the Disarmament Commission to agree on an agenda for its session this year is another setback to multilateral disarmament efforts.

My delegation is disheartened by all those developments. These two important disarmament machineries must be able to overcome those obstacles so as to move the process forward. Malaysia agrees with your assertion, Sir, that the First Committee has the duty to reaffirm the urgent need to make progress on substantive issues and to identify specific initiatives to address the security concerns of all Member States.

I should like to recapitulate that the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament underscores the fact that general and complete disarmament under effective international control is the ultimate goal of multilateral disarmament efforts. That goal is far from being achieved. States Members of the United Nations agreed at the special session that nuclear weapons posed the greatest danger to humankind and to the survival of human civilization. Today, all States remain in full agreement with that conclusion, made almost three decades ago. There should not be any doubt that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is a threat to international peace and security. More importantly, however, we must not forget that the existence of those weapons in the first place is a threat to the survival of humankind and our planet.

Disarmament and non-proliferation should be pursued together, in a mutually reinforcing manner. Malaysia reiterates its call upon all nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their commitments to a significant

reduction in their nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament. We believe that the issue of non-compliance applies both to nuclear disarmament and to nuclear non-proliferation. In that connection, the implementation of article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) by nuclear-weapon States is crucial.

The 13 practical steps identified by the 2000 NPT Review Conference in pursuing nuclear disarmament set out an achievable framework for nuclear disarmament. The implementation of those steps and other outcomes of the 2000 NPT Review Conference is even more important in a security environment in which recourse to weapons of mass destruction materials and technology by terrorists is no longer a remote risk. Malaysia looks forward to the NPT Review Conference next year, whereat States parties should demonstrate, through concrete actions rather than words, that the NPT can indeed stand the test of time in serving the security interests of all its States parties.

The integrity of the NPT must be maintained. All commitments and obligations of the States parties must be respected and fulfilled. The 2005 Review Conference will offer us the opportunity to deal effectively with myriad issues based on the three pillars under the NPT. Malaysia looks forward to working with other States parties to the NPT at the 2005 Review Conference to achieve a positive and balanced outcome in a spirit of mutual accommodation and understanding.

Malaysia fully supports the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones worldwide. Malaysia will continue to work with other colleagues in the Association of South-East Asian Nations in realizing our aspiration for the acceptance of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South-East Asia. Malaysia will continue to support the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in other parts of the world, in particular in the Middle East. In that connection, Malaysia welcomes the recent decision by the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to renounce its weapons of mass destruction programmes.

Malaysia also welcomes the recent announcement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to freeze its nuclear weapons programme as a conciliatory attempt to generate forward movement in the six-party talks. We hope that the parties concerned can respond favourably to that gesture. As a country in the East-

Asian region, Malaysia wishes to see the successful conclusion of the bilateral and multilateral efforts currently under way to redress the nuclear question in the Korean peninsula. That would certainly contribute towards ensuring a climate of peace, security and stability in the East Asian region and the world as a whole.

Malaysia will continue to work with other like-minded countries to pursue follow-up action to the General Assembly resolution on the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice concerning the legality of the threat and use of nuclear weapons. We will be presenting a draft resolution in this Committee soon.

On the question of verification and enforcement relating to weapons of mass destruction, Malaysia shares the view of many countries that existing multilateral treaty-based mechanisms, such as those under the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, need to be strengthened without resorting to other means, such as calling for action through the Security Council. It is critical that there exist the necessary political will to enable those mechanisms to work in a fair, balanced and non-discriminatory manner, taking into consideration the interests of everyone involved. Malaysia believes that full adherence to all provisions of international disarmament treaties and conventions by States parties are the only sustainable approach to multilateral disarmament and the prevention of proliferation activities.

The universalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is crucial. Pending its entry into force, all nuclear-weapon States must maintain the current moratorium on nuclear test explosions. Similarly, Malaysia awaits the universalization of the Chemical Weapons Convention and hopes that the Biological Weapons Convention will soon be fortified with a verification mechanism.

The challenges and threats posed by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons should not be taken lightly. They must be our genuine concern collectively, and not just limited to the countries or regions where conflicts have occurred or are still raging. In that connection, several ongoing undertakings are critical. We should collectively work towards the successful implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and

Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We should work to ensure the achievement of a favourable outcome of the deliberations of the Open-Ended Working Group on Tracing Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons and we should constructively contribute our views to the broad-based consultations on further steps to enhance international cooperation in preventing, combating and eradicating illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons.

Next year, as we celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations, we should explore new ideas and a fresh outlook concerning international efforts in the field of disarmament and international security. Indeed, international peace and security cannot be fully maintained without significant progress in the area of disarmament. The international community already possesses the necessary tools to advance the disarmament process. What is required is the strengthening of existing disarmament treaty-based mechanisms with the full support and political will of States. Without political will, there cannot be a genuine solution to international disarmament issues. It is about time that we reorient ourselves towards the common objective of achieving general and complete disarmament.

Mr. Choisure (Mongolia): First, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the chairmanship of this important Committee, and other members of the Bureau on their election. I assure you of my delegation's full support.

At the end of the cold war, humankind had high hopes for a new era — an era of a long and lasting global peace and effective international partnership towards the complete elimination of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. Our current reality is in stark contrast to those hopes. Plans for the development of new types of nuclear weapons are under way and thousands of existing ones are being retained by their holders. The thresholds of their use, even against non-nuclear States, are being lowered and a number of important international instruments in the field of nuclear disarmament and arms control have either been left astray or are being increasingly sidelined. Furthermore, the growing threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the danger of their possible acquisition by non-State actors and terrorist groups make it imperative for the

international community to take concerted efforts to tackle those challenges.

Over the past year and more, the international community has primarily been preoccupied, along with the war on terror, with preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and has made significant strides in that direction. Libya voluntarily decided to abandon all its weapons of mass destruction programmes and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear issue has been set on the path to a peaceful and negotiated solution.

Mongolia welcomes Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) as a meaningful step towards curbing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, yet it also holds the view that a correspondingly significant step should be made by the nuclear-weapon States in nuclear disarmament.

We strongly believe that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as the only negotiated, legally-binding instrument available to the international community and a cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime, must be implemented in its entirety. My delegation joins previous speakers in reiterating that nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing processes. Mongolia stands for the full implementation of the 13 practical steps agreed to at the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

The early entry into force and universality of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) must therefore be our first priority. The CTBT, according to its own text, is a "meaningful step in the realization of a systematic process to achieve nuclear disarmament" (*A/50/1027, p. 6*) and the cessation of all nuclear-test explosions constitutes an effective measure of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects by constraining the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and ending the development of advanced new types of nuclear weapons.

The self-imposed moratoriums on nuclear testing are of tremendous significance. Nevertheless, such unilateral measures cannot and must not be considered substitutes to a legally binding and fully verifiable commitment made through the signing and ratification of the CTBT. It is our hope that all the States that have not done so will sign or ratify the CTBT at the earliest possible date.

Mongolia also stands firmly for the early start of negotiations on a multilateral, unconditional and legally-binding instrument on negative security assurances to the non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT and negotiations on the fissile materials cut-off treaty.

In line with its policy on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, Mongolia has always been a strong supporter of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world. My Government, for its part, will continue its efforts towards institutionalizing at the international level its nuclear-weapon-free status, declared in 1992, and plans to start consultations in the near future on the conclusion of a relevant trilateral treaty with our two immediate neighbours, the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation. We firmly believe that Mongolia's internationally recognized and legally-binding nuclear-weapon-free status could further contribute towards ensuring peace and stability in the region of North-East Asia and beyond.

Mongolia, this year again, will submit a draft biennial resolution on its international security and nuclear-weapon-free status reflecting recent developments, and we look forward to its being adopted by consensus, as it has been at previous sessions.

Mongolia attaches great importance to the convening of next year's NPT Review Conference as a main forum to review the progress on every aspect of the Treaty and to make recommendations outlining the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament strategy for the coming years. Although prospects for the Conference look dim in light of the results, or rather lack of results, at the last Preparatory Committee meeting, we hope that the States parties to the Treaty will demonstrate their political will, commitment and determination to preserve and strengthen the NPT.

It is of vital importance to break the impasse at the Conference on Disarmament. As a member of the Conference, Mongolia finds it completely unacceptable that the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body has been deadlocked for the past eight years in a row, without being able to agree on a programme of work. Mongolia also attaches special importance to the work of the Disarmament Commission and notes with great regret that it has recently followed the example of the

Conference on Disarmament and has also frozen in stalemate, unable to agree on its agenda.

In light of all this, my delegation believes that the current session of the First Committee should be used to help break the deadlock at both the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission, taking advantage of the unique positioning of this body as the most representative forum for discussing and exchanging views on issues concerning international security and disarmament. We urge the concerned parties to exercise the utmost flexibility and to show genuine political will to compromise and finally to put an end to this ludicrous situation.

In conclusion, I note that efforts aimed at revitalizing the General Assembly should necessarily affect the First Committee as a Main Committee of the Assembly. Indeed, there is room to improve the methods of work and efficiency of this Committee in line with the overall processes undertaken pursuant to resolutions 58/126 and 58/316. The Mongolian delegation is confident, Sir, that, under your able stewardship, the Committee will successfully accomplish that and other important missions.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, my delegation should like warmly to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your well-deserved election to preside over our work.

I also wish to express our appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Jarmo Sareva, for the tact with which he guided our debates throughout the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

I cannot fail to mention the contribution made by Under-Secretary-General Nobuyasu Abe since he took the helm at the Department for Disarmament Affairs. His statement before this Committee was most enlightening.

The work of our Committee is unfolding at a time when international peace and security are of the deepest concern, particularly since the temptation of unilateralism remains strong, even though there is every indication that the only way to resolve conflict is through multilateral agreement. Furthermore, neither the end of the cold war nor efforts to deter the production of weapons of mass destruction and to regulate the manufacture of conventional weapons has

reduced the military capacities, including their nuclear arsenals, of the world Powers.

Far from that, we have even seen the emergence of another kind of balance of terror, characterized by the appearance of new types of weapons of mass destruction, such as biological and chemical weapons, and by the deployment of more sophisticated categories of weapons, often called smart weapons, that are all capable of annihilating humankind.

As many have said before me, the arms race is inspired and promoted above all by mutual distrust and by the hegemonism that, as everyone knows, underlies both the desire for power and the pursuit of economic interests. We shall therefore have to cultivate new virtues if we are to reverse that trend. As my delegation sees it, that remains possible if we work to put the Conference on Disarmament back on track around an agenda that meets the expectations of most of our States. Furthermore, we would benefit from strengthening the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency and in particular from placing our facilities under the Agency's control.

At the global level, it would be appropriate to strengthen initiatives to create nuclear-weapon-free zones of peace and security, such as those created by the Treaty of Pelindaba and other such instruments. It is only by strengthening all such measures that we will be able to put an end to arms proliferation and thus to prevent weapons of mass destruction from falling into the hands of terrorists.

The question of small arms and light weapons is equally disturbing and upsetting. I shall not refer yet again to the causes and effects of the proliferation of and illicit trade in such weapons. We all remember the relevant discussions on that issue held here at the United Nations at the July 2001 Conference. I should like, however, to recall that the Programme of Action adopted at that Conference is still awaiting implementation.

My delegation nevertheless welcomes the convening of the first substantive session of the Open-ended Working Group on Tracing Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, in which 106 countries participated, thus demonstrating their interest and hope in the Group's work. Once concluded, the international instrument on marking and tracing will constitute a significant step towards the eradication of the illicit

trade in small arms and light weapons, one axis of the current proliferation.

While I encourage that approach, I feel that it is also timely to recall that a number of other aspects, such as brokering and the collection of weapons already in circulation, have not yet been resolved. In that regard, I should also like to indicate that the question of anti-personnel landmines is of urgency to my country. We welcome the conclusions of the meeting held in Bangkok in 2003 and hope that the meeting to be held in Nairobi in December will further mobilize the international community to find useful solutions to the problems posed by anti-personnel landmines throughout the world.

Burkina Faso stresses the imperative of reinvigorating the Disarmament Commission so that it can address in earnest the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. At the same time, we should direct our efforts towards strengthening the treaties on zones of peace and re-energizing the regional centres.

For its part, and despite its modest resources, my country is actively participating in all international, regional and subregional disarmament initiatives. In an environment in which insecurity so often accompanies poverty, it is easy to understand why a country such as mine is at the forefront of all action to ensure the security of its population. We are prepared in that spirit to make an active and constructive contribution to the success of the work of the First Committee under your leadership, Sir.

Mr. Issa (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to congratulate you most sincerely, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee and, through you, to extend our congratulations and thanks to the other members of the Bureau and the secretariat of the Committee. We also welcome Ms. Stoute, our new Secretary, and thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, and the staff of his Department for their ongoing efforts to ensure the success of the First Committee's work.

It is perhaps appropriate to begin my statement by raising the issue of the hour: the rationalization of the work of the First Committee. I do so by noting the fact that, in spite of its complexity and dominance of our work, the discussion under way does not reflect a

commensurate level of clarity with respect to its objectives and aims. Indeed, the delegation of Egypt would draw members' attention to the fact that effectiveness and efficient performance should not be the sole criteria for evaluating United Nations disarmament and international security activities. Efforts to establish international peace and security require hard and tenacious work if we are to achieve the international consensus required to guarantee its success. Before we draft any recommendations on the issue of rationalization, we must keep its ultimate objectives in mind. The issue cannot be discussed or resolved unless its objectives are totally clear and agreed.

The First Committee is the main international forum for addressing issues of international security and disarmament. It is of particular importance in the light of the failure of this year's session of the Disarmament Commission. It is thus essential that we promote, and not reduce, the role and contribution of the Committee. The delegation of Egypt will therefore reject any measure that may hinder the Committee's work to establish the international security and disarmament agenda.

I wish to raise another extremely important point: Total transparency should prevail in all First Committee discussions, including on the issue of the rationalization of its work.

Speaking of efficiency and rationalization leads me to refer to the Conference on Disarmament and its failure for the seventh year in a row. Over the past two years, South Africa's delegation has submitted proposals on the causes of that failure and on ways to address it. In that regard, we take note of the proposal of the South African delegation that the Conference's work be suspended until agreement can be reached. That proposal may help us to address the current state of affairs in the Conference.

It is illogical for us to focus exclusively on the rationalization of the work of the First Committee, which for the fifty-ninth consecutive year is making a real contribution to the debate on international security and disarmament, while we ignore the future of the Conference on Disarmament, which has not held a substantive meeting for seven consecutive years, and while we continue fruitlessly to allocate financial and administrative resources to the Conference. Perhaps we will have the issue clearer in our minds when we hold

our debate on the Conference on Disarmament at this session.

The failure of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) should serve as a warning to the international community. It sends a clear message that must be heeded. The challenges facing the non-proliferation and disarmament regime are truly dangerous and States parties to the NPT are neither ready to accept superficial solutions to those challenges nor to make concessions over their rights under the Treaty or outside its context.

In his statement, the representative of Sweden, on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition, referred to the extreme necessity of striking a delicate balance between legal rights and obligations under the NPT and between non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament obligations. I associate my delegation with the entire statement made by the representative of Sweden and with those of others who have spoken about the credibility of that balance, including the representative of Brazil, who eloquently reviewed the aspects of the legal balance concerning the right to use nuclear power for peaceful purpose.

The delegation of Egypt cannot accept the view that obligations in the field of nuclear non-proliferation are completely independent of those in the field of nuclear disarmament. We reject the view that they can be considered to be distinct from the need to acknowledge the global character of the NPT. The universality of the NPT, particularly in the Middle East, will be at the forefront of issues to be considered over the next few years.

I cannot fail to express our sincere appreciation to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for its ongoing efforts, especially in the past two years, to meet the numerous challenges that have arisen in East Asia and the Middle East, as well as those in the field of non-proliferation and to its international status. I wish to place on record our appreciation of the IAEA for its success in strengthening its centrality in the field of non-proliferation within its mandate and in stressing its credibility as a neutral and reliable technical body. We salute that great agency and its Director General.

I wish briefly to address two challenges currently before the international community: missiles and terrorism.

With regard to missiles, I note the failure of the group of experts to consider those weapons in the preparation of its 2004 report. That failure not only reflects the sensitivity of the issue, but also sheds light on another salient point — it is impossible to impose any particular approach in dealing with international challenges without taking into account the security interests of all States.

With regard to terrorism and its link to weapons of mass destruction, I note the adoption of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which we cautiously welcomed. Our caution arose from our understanding that the required legitimacy for collective international action can be achieved only when all States Members of the United Nations — in addition to the members of the Security Council — support it and believe in its objectives. The effectiveness of resolution 1540 (2004) will therefore be assessed not merely on the basis of its origination in the Security Council, but also on the response of the States Members of the United Nations to their obligations under it; on the degree of balance in the implementation of its provisions; and on the Security Council's ongoing treatment, in an equitable manner and without double standards, of the issue of non-proliferation in its entirety, be it related to States or to terrorist groups.

In conclusion, I would note the activity of the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. The Group held its first meeting in June and it is thus too early to assess its work or to determine whether it is headed in the right direction. It is clear to my delegation, however, that we should be prudent in dealing with all issues related to small arms and light weapons and that we should strike a considered balance between what is possible and what is desired. We will provide the Committee with our detailed views on that issue when we consider the draft resolution on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Mr. Yao (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Like previous speakers, I wish, on behalf of my delegation, warmly to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to preside over our Committee. Through its geographic position, Mexico has endowed you with a sense of moderation and compromise — positive qualities necessary to the successful conclusion of our work. My

delegation is deeply gratified at having your guidance and assures you of its full readiness to cooperate.

I take this opportunity to offer my delegation's condolences to Egypt over the tragedy that took place in the Egyptian Sinai.

In fully associating ourselves with the Chairmen of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of African States, my delegation wishes once again to launch a solemn appeal for increased interest to be paid to issues related to all types of weapons, be they conventional or of mass destruction, and to disarmament and non-proliferation. I also appeal for the active, proactive, collective and united promotion of the universalization of treaties and conventions on non-proliferation and disarmament by the States Members of the United Nations; for the effective implementation, under United Nations control, of those international instruments; for the promotion and zealous defence of multilateralism by every possible means; and for the restoration of the full range of the First Committee's responsibilities in the framework of efforts to improve its effectiveness and to reform the United Nations, which are, inter alia, subjects of interest to the delegation of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

The painful and unforgettable experiences of Hiroshima and Nagasaki continue fully to justify our apprehensions regarding the threats which nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction pose to international peace and security. The 600,000 human beings killed every year by so-called conventional weapons in so-called minor conflicts prompt us to focus the same interest and awareness on those enormously destructive weapons that we give to weapons of mass destruction. That impartial interest would be translated into effective action were we to commit ourselves resolutely to the universalization of relevant treaties and conventions and to their effective implementation under United Nations control, in close cooperation with regional and subregional organizations.

Clearly, that dream can become reality only when we are determined to undertake our national and regional initiatives in a multilateral framework — the only context for effective and useful action to contribute to the implementation of the agreed objectives of the Millennium Summit.

The restoration, to which I have briefly referred, of a balance in the way we address threats to

international peace and security posed by conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction; the universalization and effective implementation of legally binding international non-proliferation and general disarmament instruments; and the triumph of multilateralism will create the appropriate framework in which the First Committee can regain and fully assume its original role, as set forth in Articles 11, 13, 14 and 15 of the United Nations Charter. That role is in keeping with the first two objectives of the Charter and without detriment to the prerogatives of the Security Council, the inevitable reform of which will help to inject healthy, renewed vigour into the United Nations.

Mr. Castellón Duarte (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your well-deserved election and to extend those congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

My delegation endorses the statement made by the representative of Brazil on behalf of the Rio Group. We wish, however, to refer to a few other events of interest.

In his report to the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS), meeting in Quito, Ecuador, in June, the Secretary General of that entity indicated that Nicaragua, the most affected country in Central America, had advanced by 70 per cent towards its goal of eliminating all the anti-personnel landmines laid in its territory during the armed conflict of the 1980s. In the past three years, the Secretary General noted, the Comprehensive Action against Anti-personnel Mines programme (AICMA) has supported the destruction of a total of 650,000 mines stockpiled in Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Peru. He further reported that the OAS Unit for the Promotion of Democracy has continued to support the assistance programme for victims of mines and undetonated devices, benefiting over 500 victims in Central America, most of whom are in Nicaragua. He also indicated that broadened assistance has been given to victims of mines in 2003 through a post-rehabilitation job training project, in cooperation with the Nicaraguan National Technological Institute, which has trained 100 people since its establishment.

The AICMA programme, according to the same report, improved the establishment of the Nicaraguan Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA), with the support of the Geneva International

Centre for Humanitarian Demining. IMSMA serves as a data bank for establishing priorities in demining, preventive education and victim assistance activities. The System is currently in place in Colombia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Ecuador and Peru.

In spite of the progress made in demining in my country, it is possible that Nicaragua may request a further extension of the deadline for declaring its territory mine-free. Experts say that the work of reaching minefields has been complicated by the poor condition of roads, the constant rainfall in affected areas and the fact that a large number of mines and other unregistered devices have been found recently. By 1993, according to the Centre for International Studies, 142,000 weapons of all types — mainly weapons of war — had been recovered in Nicaragua. The Nicaraguan Ministry of Defence has also reported that, by May of this year, 22,000 rifles and all stockpiled anti-personnel landmines had been destroyed.

Better laws and more effective regulations are needed to confront the grave problems of illicit arms trafficking. In that regard, at the initiative of my country's executive branch, we are structuring a national approach to arms control from a perspective reflected in a draft law on the control and regulation of weapons, munitions, explosives and other related materials. In April, under the sponsorship of the Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation and with the participation of the State and non-governmental organizations, a seminar was held in Managua, attended by foreign experts, to discuss and improve the draft.

In the Central American sphere, the Government of Nicaragua is trying to respond to our problems and has promoted two initiatives. The first is the Central American arms control and limitation programme to establish a reasonable balance of forces and to promote stability, mutual confidence and transparency. It seeks effective control of regional weapons and the creation of modern defence and security institutions. In that regard, in May and June, 666 man-portable air-defence systems in the arsenal of the national army were unilaterally destroyed to bolster the Central American arms control and limitation programme and as a subregional confidence- and security-building measure.

The second initiative is the Central American plan to prevent and combat the illicit traffic in small

arms and light weapons, which includes measures effectively to implement the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and other Related Materials, such as the establishment of focal points to ensure security information exchange in the regulation of weapons exports, imports and transit. Its core objective is to lay the foundations for a future harmonization of laws and to strengthen programmes for the collection and destruction of small arms and light weapons.

In conclusion, I wish to recall a statement made recently by the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Nicaragua, in which he said that

“our Government is fully convinced of the vital responsibility of all our States to combat and eliminate the illicit traffic in firearms and thus of the need to combine and step up our efforts to counter that threat to our security”.

Mr. Rademaker (United States): In accordance with the evolving practice of the Committee, I will provide an oral summary of my remarks and ask that the full text be included in the official record of today's proceedings.

When I addressed this body last year, I said that the international community stood at a crossroads that would determine whether multilateral arms control institutions could break away from cold war-era thinking and address new and emerging threats. I also expressed the strong hope of my Government that, collectively, we would opt for effectiveness and relevance.

Not long afterwards, President Bush expressed similar sentiments in an address delivered at Whitehall Palace in London. He observed that

“international organizations must be equal to the challenges facing our world, from lifting up failing States to opposing proliferation”.

He further stated that

“the success of multilateralism is not measured by adherence to forms alone, the tidiness of the process, but by the results we achieve to keep our nations secure”.

Two days later, on 20 November 2003, President Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair issued a

joint statement on multilateralism. The joint statement emphasized that

“effective multilateralism, and neither unilateralism nor international paralysis, will guide our approach”.

From the perspective of the United States, progress over the past year towards our goal of effective multilateralism in the area of arms control and disarmament has been mixed. On the positive side, the United States was very pleased with the enthusiastic reaction to the resolution that we introduced last year on the revitalization of the First Committee. The interest shown in it by so many delegations and its adoption by consensus demonstrated that many United Nations Member States agree that this Committee needs to change its ways of doing business.

The United States also welcomes the valuable recommendations submitted by Governments to the Secretary-General on practical ways to improve the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee. Our delegation has tabled a draft resolution that will incorporate many of those suggestions. This is a joint effort, and we shall continue to rely on the active participation and support of all delegations in developing a consensus text.

Candour requires us to admit that we are dismayed by the current state of the multilateral arms control machinery. Surely, the United States is not alone in that feeling. Even though the Conference on Disarmament tackled a broader range of issues this year, it remained deadlocked over its programme of work and failed, for the eighth consecutive year, to make progress on its essential function — the negotiation of multilateral arms control and disarmament agreements.

In an effort to break the logjam, the United States this year called for the initiation of two negotiations at the Conference on the rapid conclusion of a fissile material cut-off treaty, using a new approach, and on a ban on the sale or export of persistent landmines.

Ending the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons would enhance global strictures against the proliferation of nuclear weapons. At the same time, the United States has concluded that effective international verification of such a fissile material cut-off treaty is not realistically achievable. If

we are serious about ending the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, we should agree to a normative, legal ban as soon as possible, while such a ban could still have an important, practical meaning in curbing the growth of nuclear weapon stockpiles. The United States believes that we have identified an approach that can considerably shorten the period required for such negotiations.

Our Conference on Disarmament proposal on landmines is intended to help end the humanitarian crisis created by persistent landmines. According to some estimates, persistent landmines cause 10,000 to 20,000 casualties every year. Because those mines can remain active for an indefinite period, they remain dangerous to civilians for many decades after any legitimate need has passed. This initiative in the Conference will complement the ongoing effort in the context of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons to bring anti-vehicle landmines under further international controls.

The United States believes that those two items would constitute a realistic work programme for the Conference on Disarmament. The truth of the matter is that the Conference could not realistically deal with many more issues after eight years of inactivity. In any event, as a number of delegations have stated in Geneva this year, the Conference is unlikely in the future to reach a consensus that any other proposals are ripe for negotiation.

Next year's Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is occurring at a time of unprecedented challenge to the Treaty's non-proliferation goals. Over the past decade, the international community has witnessed deliberate violations of articles II and III of the Treaty and an announcement of withdrawal. Events of the past year have underscored the gravity of the threat.

One year ago, the international community knew nothing of the Libyan nuclear weapons programme. The Libyan Government wisely chose to reveal and eliminate it, however, and, with assistance from the United States and the United Kingdom, and verification by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), that now has been accomplished. The end of Libya's nuclear programme also led to the public revelation of the clandestine A. Q. Khan network,

and the United States, the United Kingdom and many other Governments have shut it down.

Those developments made clear that additional measures are needed to strengthen the NPT and the larger nuclear non-proliferation regime. President Bush's proposals of last February were aimed at that objective and at preserving the security benefits of the Treaty.

In addition, we continue to confront an overt nuclear weapons programme in North Korea. North Korea's further violations of its IAEA safeguards obligations in December 2002 led the IAEA Board of Governors to refer the case to the Security Council in February 2003. North Korea has declared its withdrawal from the NPT and continually threatens the international community with its claims of a nuclear deterrent. Iran's efforts to acquire a nuclear weapons capability have led to multiple violations of its IAEA safeguards agreement under the NPT. That case remains under investigation by the IAEA and a decisive Board of Governors meeting is scheduled for November.

Those events undermine the security of all nations. The NPT Review Conference must confront those developments as a matter of urgent priority. The United States urges all NPT parties to approach the Review Conference as an opportunity to endorse common approaches that will help to ensure the long-term benefits of the NPT. We urge support for measures that will promote compliance with the Treaty's non-proliferation undertakings and remedy existing violations. In that regard, vigorous efforts to achieve universal acceptance of the IAEA Additional Protocol are essential. The United States Senate unanimously voted its consent to the ratification of the Additional Protocol last March, and we are working on the steps necessary to achieve its implementation as a matter of priority.

While there are significant differences among NPT parties on aspects of Treaty implementation, we have in common the shared belief, as stated in the preamble of the Treaty, that "the proliferation of nuclear weapons would seriously enhance the danger of nuclear war". Let us work together to achieve an outcome of the Review Conference that reinforces the contribution of the NPT to global security.

The United States is proud of its arms control accomplishments, including our arms control

collaboration with the Russian Federation. Along with our Russian partners, we hope to table a draft resolution here in the near future to demonstrate to the international community the progress that we have made in compliance with article VI. We hope that our draft resolution will command a consensus.

My Government has made it clear that we support the principle of effective multilateralism. It certainly is the case that pursuing objectives in a multilateral setting takes longer and requires more effort. That, we think, is a reasonable price to pay for gaining widespread support in the international community for meaningful action on key questions. It would defy logic, however, to expect States to continue to rely on multilateral processes if doing so has the effect of preventing all action. Iraq is a controversial illustration of that principle. For reasons that others, perhaps, can best explain, Kosovo is a relatively non-controversial illustration of it.

President Bush emphasized in his speech at Whitehall Palace our strong desire to see multilateralism work. He stated:

"America and Great Britain have done and will do all in their power to prevent the United Nations from solemnly choosing its own irrelevance and inviting the fate of the League of Nations. It is not enough to meet the dangers of the world with resolutions; we must meet those dangers with resolve."

Those in this room who genuinely wish to see multilateralism work need to develop that resolve and the political will to support effective action against such threats as nuclear proliferation and genocide in Africa.

The United States continues to believe in the potential of the First Committee to contribute in meaningful ways to the maintenance of international peace and security. While no delegation should be expected to support measures that run counter to the security interests of its nation, the United States of America stands ready to work in good faith with others in pursuit of measures that will enhance the security of us all.

Mr. Neil (Jamaica): Jamaica associates itself with the statement delivered earlier by the Permanent Representative of the Bahamas on behalf of the countries of the Caribbean Community. I would just

wish now to make some additional observations from the standpoint of my delegation.

The goal of general and complete disarmament continues to be elusive. It was hoped that this year would have been marked by a renewed confidence and optimism in the disarmament agenda. Regrettably, that has not been the case. In an almost ritualistic fashion, this Committee has been compelled to repeat the litany of failures of the past year, all of which are known to us. Indeed, the list of unresolved issues, rather than diminishing, seems to be gaining a momentum of its own.

My delegation continues to be concerned at the apparent inertia in the disarmament agenda, evidenced by lack of consensus in the Conference on Disarmament in spite of attempts to break the deadlock; the failure of the Disarmament Commission to agree on its agenda; the stalemate in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) preparatory process; the continued proliferation of weapons; and the non-compliance with or the non-entry into force of key multilaterally negotiated disarmament treaties. It is perhaps time to consider how best to reinvigorate the different parts of the disarmament machinery, including by way of a thorough review of their working methods and a possible change in the manner in which decisions are taken. We maintain that such a consideration should best be carried out within the context of the holding of a fourth special session on disarmament, which Jamaica fully supports.

We agree that there is some merit in addressing the working methods and procedures of this Committee in order to improve its effectiveness. Some of the suggestions put forward and those which have been implemented under your chairmanship, Sir, will assist in improving the efficiency of the Committee. At the same time, we are of the view that the real challenge lies in exercising the political will and commitment necessary to achieve the stated goals and objectives of the Committee as they pertain to disarmament and non-proliferation. The demonstration of such commitment, in accordance with Charter principles and obligations and in compliance with the relevant multilaterally negotiated disarmament treaties, is vital to any improvement in the effectiveness of the Committee.

The international community has been all too painfully aware that, within the last few years, there

have been continued threats to international peace and security. While we agree that the impact of certain threats, such as terrorism, represents a dangerous challenge to global security, the international response to those phenomena should not be at the expense of previously stated multilateral commitments in the areas of disarmament, non-proliferation and the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. In our view, there should be a balanced consideration of all threats to international security and no action should be at variance with the Charter's principles and objectives.

My delegation has read with interest the report of the Group of Governmental Experts, so ably chaired by Ambassador Rivas of Colombia, on the relationship between disarmament and development in the current international context. We agree with the observation that

“security in all its aspects continues to play a crucial role in both disarmament and development”. (*A/59/119, para. 20*)

At the same time, we are concerned that world military spending has increased to a total of \$956 billion dollars, with about 75 per cent of that figure being expended by developed countries. We are equally concerned that there will be a renewal of the arms race as States invest in more deadly weapons in the elusive search for security. The possibility of increased military spending due to increased instances of conflict is also a source of anxiety.

While we recognize the sovereign right of States to ensure their self-defence, it is, however, all too clear that there has not been comparable spending in promoting economic development or in alleviating poverty. That is even more striking when one takes into account that, one year before the five-year review of the Millennium Development Goals, the international community is still far too short of achieving the goals it set for itself in the year 2000.

It is in that context that we believe that a far more practical approach in addressing security concerns would be to take into consideration the needs of people for justice and economic well-being, for, in spite of impressive arsenals and sophisticated weaponry, the desperate minds of the dissatisfied and dispossessed can fashion a dangerous weapon out of any object.

Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) has highlighted the possibility of non-State actors gaining

control of and access to weapons of mass destruction. We agree that this is a pressing and troubling possibility, but maintain that a preferable approach would be to eliminate those weapons in their entirety so as to prevent any chance of illegal acquisition. It is also important that such binding commitments be more properly negotiated in an inclusive, open and comprehensive manner.

Jamaica shares the concern expressed by the Secretary-General that there needs to be a return to the rule of law and adherence to international norms. Such an approach is vitally needed in the area of disarmament, where clearly established norms and treaty obligations should be upheld and respected in a non-discriminatory, balanced and transparent manner, thus ensuring that collective security continues to be governed by a rules-based regime.

Jamaica remains committed to the cause of general and complete disarmament. That commitment is evidenced by Jamaica's ratification of a number of disarmament conventions, its compliance with its obligations under those conventions and the active pursuit of appropriate measures to ensure compliance. We remain fully supportive of the aims and objectives of the non-proliferation Treaty in seeking to eliminate the spread and use of nuclear weapons, and particularly in the strengthening of the regime in relation to vertical and horizontal proliferation, and attach importance to adherence to article VI obligations, which gives greater credibility to the NPT. We hope that those and other issues will be fully addressed in the 2005 Review Conference of the NPT.

My delegation continues to reaffirm its support for the early conclusion of an international convention to identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons. As explained by the representative of the Bahamas, we do not produce those weapons, yet we have to contend with their destabilizing effects on our economies and societies. In our view, these real and immediate challenges to our peace and stability constitute a new and troubling threat to international security.

We therefore reiterate our commitment to the 2001 Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and look forward to the second biennial meeting to be held in 2005, as well as to the Review Conference in 2006.

As a State party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, Jamaica welcomes the convening of the First Review Conference, to be held later in 2004 in Nairobi, Kenya. We urge the full implementation of the Convention, and we commend those countries that have taken active steps to comply with its provisions.

In conclusion, Sir, allow me to express my own personal satisfaction on your election as Chairman of the Committee. We are confident that, under your skilful leadership, the Bureau will steer this year's deliberations of the First Committee to a successful conclusion. You can be assured of the support and cooperation of my delegation in the discharge of your duties. In addition, I thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, and the other members of his Department for the work they are doing to advance international peace and security.

Permit me also to extend a special word of congratulations to the new Secretary of the Committee, Ms. Cheryl Stoute, a dedicated, knowledgeable and hardworking national from the Caribbean. We are confident that the administrative matters of the Committee will be in safe and capable hands. I understand that she is the first of her gender to be appointed to that important position in the Committee, and I commend the Secretariat for its vision in making that appointment.

Mr. Hassan (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it gives me great pleasure to express to you, Sir, my most sincere congratulations on your election as Chairman of this important Committee. I am confident that, with your well-known expertise, you will guide our work to the desired results with regard to issues of disarmament and international security. I wish you and the other members of the Bureau every success. Moreover, I cannot fail to thank the Chairman at the previous session, the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs and entire staff of the Department for all their work on multilateral disarmament mechanisms and international cooperation aimed at maintaining international peace and security.

We are meeting to discuss disarmament and international security. Many changes related to disarmament issues have taken place at the regional and international levels. That highlights the fact that

the only way in which to promote international peace and security is to improve the multilateral channels through which we can firmly and resolutely address the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and of nuclear weapons with a view to overcoming the imbalance between nuclear and non-nuclear States.

It is regrettable that, despite some unilateral and bilateral initiatives on the part of some States to reduce their nuclear and strategic arsenals, a number of major Powers persist in advancing their nuclear, chemical and biological technologies and in conducting tests under the pretext of deterrence and national security, despite all the instruments, protocols and conventions calling for the prohibition of such practices. Such selectivity and inequity in addressing disarmament issues lead many States to doubt the global effectiveness, universality and implementation of the conventions and treaties, because their substance lies not in their number or the number of States that have acceded to them, but in their fair and full implementation.

The worldwide spread of conflict, war and hotbeds of tension has caused some countries to live in a state of defensive preparedness, which is clearly reflected in the constantly increasing funds allocated by States to strengthening their military capacities. That has affected contributions to programmes under the Millennium Development Goals — efforts to deal with such urgent humanitarian issues as hunger, natural disasters, and the environment — thereby undermining such efforts and revealing the discrepancies and unfairness in the standards being employed.

We call on all nuclear countries to take serious and urgent steps to reduce their expenditures on weapons programmes in order to achieve a phased dismantling of their nuclear and strategic arsenals. Likewise, we support measures aimed at elaborating binding international instruments to provide non-nuclear States with safeguards against threats from nuclear States, without compromising the right of every State to the peaceful and scientific uses of nuclear energy in the service of humanity.

As the Under-Secretary-General stated before the Committee, there is universal recognition of the urgent need to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones throughout the world, and we endorse that statement. We maintain that that is the easiest way to promote the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, thereby consolidating peace and security at the regional

and international levels. Security is indivisible, as members are aware.

It is true that many countries have signed treaties aimed at establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones; indeed, those States cover approximately 50 per cent of the planet. But such zones still need to be established in certain hotbeds of international tension, particularly the Middle East region. That region could have become a nuclear-weapon-free zone but for Israel's explicit and persistent refusal to subject its nuclear reactors to the safeguard regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency. That poses a threat to the peace and security not only of that burning region, but of the world at large. In that connection, we salute Libya's wise and courageous initiative to dismantle and put an end to all its nuclear-weapon programmes.

The Sudan is a genuine partner in international disarmament efforts. We have also ratified many relevant international conventions and treaties, ranging from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. After participating in the Vienna workshop on the working methods of the United Nations and its objectives throughout the world, last year my country hosted the First Conference of the African National Authorities of the Chemical Weapons Convention States Parties, where important recommendations were made with regard to making all of Africa a nuclear-weapon-free zone and emphasizing the purely peaceful purposes of nuclear energy. Moreover, the Sudan has participated and played an active role in all the workshops held in Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Jordan and Kenya on that issue.

Here, let me recall my country's participation throughout the preparatory work for the summit on landmines to be held in Nairobi later this year. My country, indeed, was among the first to sign and ratify the Ottawa Convention. We are playing an active role in the region because we believe that a regional and international multilateral approach is the best guarantee for achieving the universality of conventions and following up their implementation in order to achieve their ultimate goals.

Another priority disarmament issue for the Sudan is small arms and light weapons. As members know, the Sudan suffers more than most other countries from this problem, which fanned the flames of the tribal wars in the west. The matter was compounded by tribal

issues that made the possession of such weapons part of the rituals of the tribe and a demonstration of its power to other tribes, and controlling and removing such weapons has become extremely difficult. We, more than any other party, recognize the risks posed by this phenomenon and the need to combat it decisively. We have therefore actively participated in all international and regional forums aimed at curbing the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons.

In addition, we have undertaken national efforts to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the region because we believe that such weapons are closely linked with transnational organized crime, terrorism and trafficking in narcotics. In this respect, we are making tremendous efforts within the African Union, the Arab League and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, and through cooperation with United Nations programmes on landmines. We are also working with sub-Sahel countries and our neighbours to resume the demarcation of borders and tighten customs controls at the borders. We affirm that the proliferation and spread of such weapons should be combated by the countries that manufacture such weapons, not by countries that are affected by them. It is important that countries producing small arms and light weapons not provide them to non-State actors and groups.

We stress the importance of providing all possible support, especially technical support, to countries in transition from armed conflict to peace, especially in the field of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, because all these factors are interrelated.

In conclusion, our deliberations at this session are quite different from previous deliberations, in the light of the tensions prevailing in many parts of the world due to issues of armament and proliferation, and due to the fear of terrorists possessing weapons of mass destruction. In effect, the First Committee's responsibilities have doubled. The special proposals concerning its reform are of paramount importance and should be the subject of serious careful, in-depth study, so that the mandate of the First Committee with regard to disarmament and international security is not compromised. This is of special importance, since the world urgently needs to become a peaceful planet, free from all threats, so that all its capacities can be devoted to development, the environment, reconstruction, peace and the service of mankind, and not to the machinery of war and destruction.

Mr. Fils-Aimé (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): My delegation, Sir, joins all previous speakers in congratulating you on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. It is always a pleasure to see a brother from the Latin America and Caribbean region, a region which established the Treaty of Tlatelolco to become the first nuclear-weapon-free zone, chairing the work of the Disarmament and International Security Committee.

We take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Jarmo Sareva of Finland for having so skilfully guided our debates during the fifth-eighth session of the General Assembly. We also thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nobuyasu, who correctly highlighted in his introductory statement that one of the most difficult challenges this Committee will have to face during this session will be reconciling two seemingly contradictory objectives: adapting to the realities of a changing world, on the one hand, and respecting, on the other, the fundamental principles laid down and agreed upon, such as those of the United Nations Charter. Such principles should not be subjected to yearly cycles of negotiation.

We are no longer living in the cold war era. But today we carry out our deliberations in a world characterized by the threat of international terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and other illicit activities. In that context, my delegation regrets that the Conference on Disarmament has thus far not been able to adopt a programme of work. It has been paralysed for seven years now. We need to show firmer political will to move forward with our work. We need to show greater flexibility and sensitivity and thus create a climate more conducive to negotiations and progress.

My delegation affirms its faith in multilateral cooperation, and we support the view of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, regarding the need for the supremacy of law. Along those lines, we call for respect for the principles and norms enshrined in international treaties and encourage the advancement of their universality, their implementation and their verification mechanisms. We deplore the fact that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has yet to enter into force and that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has not yet become truly universal in nature. The Republic of Haiti urges member States to honour their commitments in the area of arms control and disarmament and to work

for the total elimination of weapons of mass destruction, as they had themselves pledged to do during the 2000 Review Conference of Parties to the NPT.

The material damage and loss of life that can result from a terrorist attack have been clearly demonstrated. Terrorism strikes indiscriminately and spares no one, whether it be Sergio Vieira de Mello, innocent train passengers in Madrid or Tokyo or schoolchildren in Beslan. In that context, my delegation is particularly concerned by the possible acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by terrorist groups whose acts are repugnant to the universal conscience of humankind. Here, we welcome the high priority that the Security Council continues to give to the fight against this scourge. My delegation commits itself, to the best of its abilities, to adopt all provisions designed to combat terrorism in all its forms, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) of 28 September 2001.

The danger posed by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons is by no means insignificant. They kill 500,000 people every year, and there are more than 360 million such weapons in circulation throughout the world. They are the weapon of choice in regional conflicts, and during the 1990s they cost the lives of 4 million people, most of them women and children. My delegation once again reiterates its commitment fully to cooperate with the rest of the international community to put an end to that scourge, which is contributing to crime and to political, social and economic instability.

Given the importance of the disarmament process, we are all aware of the need to avoid complacency. Thus we must ensure that the First Committee is truly the United Nations forum that is entrusted with issues of disarmament and international security. My delegation would like to assure you, Mr. Chairman, of its full support as you guide our deliberations and carry out your mission.

Mr. Moleko (Lesotho): I should like at the outset to extend my congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to steer the work of the First Committee during this session, as well as to the other members of the Bureau. My delegation is confident, Sir, that, given your rich experience and able leadership, you will guide our work to a successful conclusion. I should like to assure you of the full cooperation and support of

my delegation. I should also like to congratulate the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, for the enlightening remarks that he made at the beginning of our deliberations.

There is a consensus that terrorism is the greatest menace of our time. There is also little — if any — doubt that it is only through multilateral efforts that the international community can win the war against terrorism. My delegation shares the fears that have already been expressed by several delegations that, unless appropriate joint and collective measures are taken, non-State actors might acquire and use weapons of mass destruction. In that regard, my delegation welcomes the adoption of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), on measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction.

The question that we must continue to ask ourselves is how long we are going to be able to keep these weapons out of the hands of non-State actors. In my delegation's view, States parties can start by complying with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Nuclear-weapon States should eliminate their nuclear arsenals, and non-nuclear-weapon States should not acquire nuclear weapons. States outside the NPT that possess nuclear weapons should adhere to the Treaty as they, we would hope, consider becoming parties to it. Furthermore, jointly and collectively, we must fully implement the outcomes of the 1995 and 2000 NPT Review Conferences, and the relevant States must implement the 13 practical steps agreed to at the 2000 Review Conference. There is a consensus that the world would be a safer place if the nuclear-weapon States respected their obligation to disarm and if the non-nuclear-weapon States adhered to their obligation not to acquire nuclear weapons. At the 2005 Review Conference, when we will review all aspects of the NPT, we should be able to build upon those foundations.

Lesotho would like to see the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty enter into force, as we remain convinced that it is an effective measure for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects. Without its entry into force, it will not be possible to fully implement the noble verification regime envisaged in the Treaty. Thus, the impact of the Treaty — its deterrent effect — will not be fully realized. We therefore join previous speakers in calling

upon the remaining 11 States to become parties to the Treaty without delay.

My delegation regrets that there has been no progress in the negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. We believe that such a treaty would contribute to nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Lesotho is disappointed by the continuing lack of progress in the Conference on Disarmament — the only multilateral negotiating forum in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation — as a result of divergent views on the programme of work. We are also very discouraged by the fact that this year, the work of the Disarmament Commission was once again frustrated by absence of agreement on agenda items to be considered by the Commission.

The threat posed by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons cannot be overemphasized, as such illicit trade is linked to various forms of organized transnational crime and instability in several countries. As stated in the 2004 *Small Arms Survey*, there is a “growing conviction that States have a legal duty to protect their citizens from widespread crime and insecurity on their territory”. For that reason, Member States should endeavour to implement the 2001 Programme of Action on small arms. Furthermore, my delegation hopes that meetings regarding, respectively, the tracing and the brokering of illicit small arms and light weapons, will reach successful outcomes.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to reiterate the importance of acceding to, ratifying and fully implementing multilateral disarmament treaties, including the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention and the Ottawa Treaty on anti-personnel mines. We also wish to encourage all the signatories to the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty — the Treaty of Pelindaba — to ratify it as soon as possible.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I have been asked to postpone the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions under all disarmament and international security items, originally set for Monday, 11 October, at 6 p.m. Consequently, following consultations on the matter with members of the Bureau and the Secretariat, I have decided, in a spirit of flexibility, to postpone the deadline for the submission of all draft resolutions until Wednesday, 13 October at 2 p.m.

That leaves the Secretariat with the minimum time it needs to process and translate all draft resolutions so that they are ready during the third week of our session, when the Committee starts the thematic part of its work. It is therefore very important that we make no further change in this date.

Once again, I urge delegations to make use of the services and support that the Secretariat has already offered and to submit their draft resolutions both in hard copy and in electronic form. I also urge delegations already in a position to submit their draft resolutions, not to wait until Wednesday to do so; if the original deadline could be respected, the Secretariat and the Chair would be grateful.

It is likely that the general debate will continue on Monday and Tuesday and perhaps into Wednesday, following our agreed principle of a rolling list, and taking into account the average length of statements thus far. I do not wish to be critical, but I think it is important that we be aware that almost all delegations have exceeded the recommended time. I am simply reiterating my appeal that delegations try, insofar as possible, to shorten their statements and, above all, be ready to follow the order of the list, so that we can make good use of our time on Monday and Tuesday and, if necessary, part of Wednesday.

As the Chair has proposed, the next stage will be an interactive discussion. This could begin on Wednesday, as soon as we complete the general debate. I have asked the Secretariat to circulate an informal paper, on which I have consulted with all the members of the Bureau. It aims to explain the structure of the discussion so that it can be productive.

This could be discussed in informal consultations early next week if there are any details that need to be changed. It is an indicative paper and is simply intended to facilitate the discussions.

As members see, the core of the first interactive meeting will be an analysis of the follow-up to our decisions. For that purpose, I have asked Under-Secretary-General Abe to provide us with a frank, open introduction to some of the issues that he considers of greatest importance. I do not mean a detailed report; just an indication of some of the progress that has been made and, perhaps, some of the obstacles facing us, specifically in his area of responsibility: the Department for Disarmament Affairs, with respect to the implementation of the mandates the Committee has

entrusted it with. Perhaps the Under-Secretary-General could also report on the level of response by Member States to requests for information. And perhaps he could indicate how the capacity of the Department has been strengthened to enable it to respond to our requests in an analytical way. In line with Assembly resolution 58/316, this is to be a frank discussion geared towards identifying ways to strengthen our relationship with the Department.

We might also invite representatives of international organizations whose mandates are relevant to the work of the Committee, notably the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. Next week I will have more specific information on who might participate in the exercise, on the understanding that they will not repeat reports or statements that have already been made or that are going to be made in plenary meetings of the Assembly. We are talking not about exhaustive reports, but rather about identifying the tasks we have entrusted to those organizations and how they have carried them out.

We shall then review the responses of Member States to General Assembly resolution 58/41. For that purpose I believe it is very important that we have the support of Ambassador Sareva as Committee Chairman at the fifty-eighth session.

I will not speak at further length on this informal paper. I think I have given a general idea of what the two initial interactive meetings will be, and on Monday we can, if members wish, take up some additional points.

Let me note too that document A/C.1/59/CRP.2 has been circulated. It contains a proposal made by the Chair following consultations with the Bureau: an indicative timetable for the thematic debate. I will introduce that conference room paper at our next meeting.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Najafi (Islamic Republic of Iran): The hour is late, so I will be brief. As you said, Mr. Chairman, the interactive exercise in the First Committee this year will be very important for all of us, because it was approved by the General Assembly, which has

encouraged the Main Committees to work in a more interactive manner in order to facilitate their discussions and to enhance their effectiveness. We appreciate, Sir, that you have had informal consultations on your programme for this year's interactive discussions. We also appreciate your informal paper, which is very useful in guiding us in the management of our interactive discussions this year.

My delegation has already stated its views during the consultations we have had with you and other Committee members. In particular, we have views on how to involve people from other international organizations since, first of all, the Committee does not have experts who can go into detail on matters relating to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) and the Ottawa Convention, to name a few.

Secondly, since many of the resolutions on these international agreements call for accession to international treaties, these issues will also certainly be addressed in the Committee. If we invite representatives of those international organizations, the question of accession or non-accession, or concerns about accession, will surely be raised in the meeting. I do not know in what way it would be useful to engage in that discussion in a general manner.

Thirdly, some of those issues — concerning, for example, the IAEA — are not on the First Committee's agenda, but are among the agenda items addressed by the General Assembly in plenary meeting.

Hence, I am not sure that inviting officials of international disarmament treaty organizations would be a useful exercise since, as I said, we do not have the relevant experts, and we would get into the political consideration of issues of accession or non-accession. Also, again, some of the issues are not within the Committee's agenda.

Still, I think it would be useful to have a more thorough discussion of this item, especially since we have received the reports from some of these organizations, in particular the OPCW and the CTBTO, whose representatives are speaking in the general debate.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I take note of the concerns of the representative of the Islamic

Republic of Iran. Unfortunately, we have no more time to respond to his queries extensively, so I will confine

myself to saying that we will come back to this issue next week.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.