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First Committee

4th meeting

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Official Records

Chairman: Mr. Badji (Senegal)

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

Agenda items 88 to 105 (continued)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

Mr. Antonov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me, on behalf of the Russian delegation, to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to your post. May I also welcome Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, who has done a great deal to find solutions to the present complex situation in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. Together with you, Sir, we have interesting and important work ahead that would make it possible to orient and channel our activities for the coming year.

In speaking on 10 February 2007 at the Munich Conference on Security Policy, Russian President Vladimir Putin encouraged everyone to engage in a serious and substantive discussion of the far from satisfactory situation in the field of international security. He noted that “The potential danger of the destabilization of international relations is connected with obvious stagnation in the disarmament issue.”

Nuclear disarmament is one of the core elements needed for strengthening international security and strategic stability. In recent years we have seen a drastic reduction in nuclear weapons. Thus, starting in 1991, the Russian nuclear arsenal has been reduced fivefold, while the total stockpiles of non-strategic nuclear weapons decreased by three quarters. The

Moscow Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions and the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) are being implemented. In view of the expiration of START in 2009, we are maintaining a dialogue with the United States on a new arrangement to replace that Treaty. Our approach to this issue is to try to retain what is useful and is operating effectively under the START regime.

When dealing with the process of nuclear disarmament there is a need to take into account the inherent interconnection between strategic offensive and defensive missile armaments. The implementation of unilateral plans to build a global antimissile defence would upset the balance of forces. We are convinced that the deployment of elements of a global United States antiballistic missile system (ABM) in the Czech Republic and Poland, and the appearance of ABM strike weapons in outer space, would adversely affect the disarmament process.

In order to avoid the well-known “action-counteraction” cold war scenario, Russian President Vladimir Putin has proposed an alternative solution, one based on collective interaction. He has proposed an analysis of potential missile threats up to the year 2020 and consideration of the issue of establishing a regional system of monitoring the development of the strategic situation. I would like particularly to emphasize that our proposal is not meant to complement United States plans to deploy a global ABM defence base in Europe but rather it is an alternative to such plans. We believe that the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles continues to retain

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its relevance for the maintenance of strategic security and stability. We call upon all countries, primarily those with missile capabilities, to jointly consider further strengthening the Treaty's regime.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and a basis for international security and stability. Our high priority here is to ensure its effective strengthening and implementation, close the gaps, further advance its universality and strengthen its resilience. We are satisfied that despite all the difficulties and controversies, we have succeeded in setting a constructive tone for seeking joint decisions on strengthening the Treaty within the NPT review process. That work must be continued.

We believe that a ban on nuclear tests would reinforce the nuclear non-proliferation regime. We call on all countries on which the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty depends to ratify it as soon as possible.

Today additional measures are required to strengthen security assurances to the non-nuclear States. We do not object to the elaboration of a global arrangement to provide such assurances to non-nuclear States as would prohibit the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, taking into account the exceptional cases stipulated in the military doctrines of the nuclear Powers that determine when such weapons could be used.

We consider strengthening the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) verification activities and the universalization of the Additional Protocol to the Nuclear Safeguards Agreement with the Agency to be an important effort in strengthening the non-proliferation regime. We call upon all States that have not yet put into effect the Additional Protocol to do so without delay.

Given the growing significance and role of nuclear energy in the world, we propose to work collectively on models of nuclear energy development to provide for programmes for a reliable supply of nuclear fuel on the basis of international cooperation as an alternative to the proliferation of sensitive technologies. One such model is the establishment of international centres that would provide nuclear-fuel-cycle services. As a first step, the International Centre for Uranium Enrichment has been established in Russia.

We believe that preventing nuclear weapons and materials from falling into the hands of terrorists is an important and urgent task. The 2006 Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism put forward by the Presidents of Russia and the United States is relevant to the resolution of this acute problem. We expect that all countries that share its goals will join this Initiative.

In his address at the 2007 Munich Conference on Security Policy, President Putin stressed that the placement of weapons in outer space "could have unpredictable consequences for the international community and provoke nothing less than the beginning of a nuclear era".

During the 2007 session of the Conference on Disarmament, we presented to our partners for their consideration a draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and the use or threat of use of force against space objects. We support the prompt re-establishment of the relevant ad hoc committee at the Conference on Disarmament, which will be charged with drafting the treaty.

Transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities might discourage those who intend to place weapons in outer space. During the current General Assembly session the Russian delegation is planning to introduce a draft resolution on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities. Its aim is to contribute to the further analysis of such measures.

Yet another priority for us at the present Assembly session is the issue of international information security. We will introduce a draft resolution on developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security. Its main goal is to reaffirm the commitment to set up in 2009 a group of governmental experts to continue to study threats in the sphere of information security and possible cooperative measures to address them. We are counting on support for the Russian draft resolutions and call upon all Member States to co-sponsor them.

We support the unconditional fulfilment by all Member States of their obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

The missile non-proliferation issue calls for a solution. The main concern here is the lack of a legally

binding international agreement that would limit the proliferation of missile means of delivery of weapons of mass destruction. I remind the Committee of the Russian proposal to establish a global missile non-proliferation regime.

Today we acknowledge that disarmament is at a crisis stage. The stability of its international legal basis is being threatened. We must observe that some treaties are not functioning properly and others are eroding and decaying. We are about to have a treaty vacuum in the area of strategic arms. It is impossible to put into effect new treaties that have already been agreed upon while negotiation mechanisms are partially disabled. New challenges are emerging, and the existing disarmament and non-proliferation mechanisms cannot always provide adequate responses. One such challenge is the threat that nuclear weapons or nuclear materials may fall into the hands of non-State actors.

The force factor is acquiring growing importance in international politics. The trend to resolve inter-State problems by coercive measures is becoming more pronounced, to the prejudice of political and diplomatic means and United Nations mechanisms. This in turn is pushing a growing number of States to increase their defence capabilities, even by choosing a military nuclear option.

Evidently, under these circumstances we need to pool our efforts in order to prevent the situation from deteriorating further, since that would have catastrophic and irreversible consequences for the entire system of international security and stability. We believe that the joint elaboration of a positive disarmament agenda would offer good prospects. This is a difficult and comprehensive task and all countries without exception must participate, since disarmament is above all a process that is conducted on a reciprocal basis. Creating favourable conditions for promoting disarmament, such as ensuring strategic and regional stability and equal security for all, must become a top priority.

Allow me to assure you, Mr. Chairman, of the support of the Russian delegation and its willingness to cooperate in order to achieve practical results in the work of the Committee.

Mrs. Asmady (Indonesia): Let me first congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Committee. We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election. My

delegation assures you of its full support and cooperation in the promotion of our collective agenda under your very capable leadership. I should also like to commend the Secretariat for launching the Quickfirst website. I am certain it will facilitate our work.

My delegation welcomes the restructuring of the Department for Disarmament Affairs into the Office for Disarmament Affairs as part of the Secretary-General's commitment to revitalizing the international disarmament agenda. I wish to congratulate Ambassador Sergio Duarte on his appointment as High Representative of the Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs and to affirm the continued support of the Indonesian delegation for the work of the new Office.

Indonesia associates itself with the statement made by my delegation on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and by the delegation of Myanmar on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The future of multilateral diplomacy, regrettably, remains uncertain despite the earnest efforts of the majority of Member States. The Conference on Disarmament has not been able to resolve its substantive programme of work for almost a decade now. The 2007 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission ended without substantive recommendations. The Open-ended Working Group on a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament still could not agree on the objectives and agenda for the session. The first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) found itself mostly wrangling on procedural rather than substantive issues.

It is imperative that lessons be drawn from the setbacks in the disarmament and non-proliferation field. The Secretary-General summed up this grave situation aptly when he stated:

“The existing stalemate on these life-and-death matters is simply unacceptable. We need to break it through far-reaching ideas and renewed political will that would propel us forward.”
(Press Release SG/SM/11096)

All those hopeful for peace and stability in the world can only endorse this call. We hope that action in this respect will be intensified.

The NPT continues to play a crucial role as the landmark international treaty aimed at preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, promoting cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and furthering the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament. States parties should spare no effort to fully implement its provisions and pursue its universality.

In this regard, those outside the regime should be encouraged to join the Treaty rather than be rewarded with the benefit of nuclear cooperation. It would be more logical if nuclear cooperation could be rendered exclusively to parties to the Treaty. Any cooperation with non-State parties not only undermines the NPT regime but also provides less incentive for those States parties willing to comply fully with the provisions of the Treaty, particularly where those faithful parties are faced with incremental obstacles to pursuing the peaceful uses of nuclear energy by the unilateral imposition of strict restrictions on the export of nuclear materials.

The NPT review process serves as an important opportunity to assess progress in implementing global nuclear non-proliferation norms. We hope that whatever was achieved at the first session of the Preparatory Committee will be built upon at the Committee's future sessions so that we might have a successful Review Conference in 2010.

Nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, be they in the possession of States or non-State actors, are a threat to humanity. As long as these dangerous devices exist, the risk that they will be used — by accident or design — will continue to haunt prospects for international peace and security. The best way to do away with the danger of nuclear weapons is to eliminate them completely. This eventuality is not beyond the reach of the world community.

However, despite encouraging signs from former leaders in some nuclear-weapon States, some of these countries continue to disregard their disarmament obligations. The lack of leadership by the nuclear-weapon States in this area continues. In general, we perceive that nuclear-weapon States are not doing enough to live up to their disarmament commitments. Hence, we will continue to urge them to take the necessary steps to make further progress on nuclear

disarmament in a verifiable and irreversible manner, including perhaps by requesting the International Court of Justice to render an advisory opinion on the nuclear disarmament obligation of States.

The debates remain focused on proliferation risks, as in the cases of North Korea and Iran. In this context we welcome the positive developments in the Six-Party Talks process, particularly the agreement among the parties earlier this month on second-phase actions for the implementation of the Joint Statement. Similarly, we welcome the recent agreement between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on a work plan to resolve outstanding nuclear issues. Both are encouraging signs that peaceful means are being given priority in resolving differences. We hope this trend will continue.

To most people, to deliberate about non-proliferation and disarmament is to look at different sides of the same coin as they are mutually reinforcing. Consequently, concerns about these issues should be addressed in a balanced, comprehensive, and non-discriminatory manner. That is the most sensible and workable approach, and indeed the only one likely to make headway on both disarmament and non-proliferation concerns. The challenges of today and the future will be effectively addressed only if they are tackled multilaterally, with the United Nations at centre stage and in line with the existing multilaterally agreed conventions and agreements on disarmament and non-proliferation. Crucially, there has to be full conformity with international law and the principles of the United Nations Charter.

We regret that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) continues to languish, due to the refusal of some nuclear-weapon States to adhere to it. As a signatory to the CTBT, Indonesia believes that the prohibition of nuclear tests, be they explosive or non-explosive, constitutes an effective measure towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We are aware of our responsibility and will continue the process of CTBT ratification which is currently under way.

We recognize the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones as a positive measure towards the strengthening of global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In this regard, the States parties to the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone — that is, the 10 member States of the

Association of Southeast Asian Nations — intend to introduce a draft resolution in the First Committee at the present session entitled “Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (Bangkok Treaty)”. We hope our draft resolution will receive wide support from United Nations Member States.

The peaceful uses of nuclear energy under IAEA regulations are necessary, particularly for developing countries in their efforts to improve the well-being of their peoples. We believe that the international community should not be sceptical of the activities of certain States that are parties to the NPT in building peaceful nuclear programmes, as long as these programmes are not diverted to military purposes. That is the inalienable right of all States and it is fully guaranteed by the NPT. It is important to recognize that the IAEA is the sole competent authority to verify compliance with the obligations under its safeguards agreements and Additional Protocol.

The concerted effort by the Conference on Disarmament’s six Presidents and the thematic discussions under the seven coordinators in the Conference were efforts undertaken in the Conference in 2007. However, Indonesia regrets the inability of the Conference on Disarmament to agree on its programme of work, despite the substantive discussions and informal consultations that were conducted this year. It is our view that each member State should demonstrate flexibility in order to make the Conference function. We also realize that it is imperative to address all core issues in a balanced and comprehensive manner, taking into account the priorities of all member States. Along this line, Indonesia hopes that the Conference on Disarmament will agree on its programme of work and start negotiations immediately.

We feel strongly that the focus on the threat of weapons of mass destruction and their proliferation should not divert attention from the regulation and reduction of conventional weapons. The proliferation of such weapons, particularly illicit small arms and light weapons, continues to seriously threaten peace and security in too many regions of the world. In February this year the Government of Indonesia deposited at the United Nations its instrument of ratification of the Mine Ban Convention, thus becoming the Convention’s 153rd State party. By joining the Mine Ban Convention, Indonesia is once again demonstrating its firm commitment to achieving a global disarmament regime in general and to creating

a mine-free world in particular. It is our fervent hope that this step will be followed by other countries that remain outside the Convention, most particularly in the South-East Asia region, which is considered to be one of the most mine-affected areas of the world.

Finally, more than ever there is a need for Member States to muster greater political will and to intensify their efforts to overcome all impediments to the global disarmament and non-proliferation agenda. We assure everyone of our support and cooperation in continuing to take tangible steps.

Mr. MacKay (New Zealand): We are very pleased — and I personally am very pleased — to see you, Sir, in the Chair of the First Committee. You can certainly be assured of my delegation’s full support as you lead us through the Committee’s comprehensive work programme this year.

For many of us, a key focus in 2007 was the effort to find a pathway for the Conference on Disarmament to recommence negotiations. The six Presidents’ proposal has been delicately crafted to accommodate the concerns of States. We agree with the Secretary-General’s assessment that to move forward on the basis of the six Presidents’ proposal “would have a positive impact on the international security atmosphere” and “would demonstrate to the international community at large that the security challenges before us are not overwhelming, but can be addressed collectively” (*CD/PV.1701, p. 2*).

Considerable momentum has been created within the Conference on Disarmament, but it has not yet proved sufficient. However, through delegations’ engagement in the comprehensive schedule of activities during 2007, we have all had the opportunity to glimpse the potential of the Conference to truly engage on international security issues. We urge all delegations in the Conference on Disarmament to heed the Secretary-General’s call and to exercise maximum flexibility in their efforts to commence substantive negotiations as early as possible in 2008.

My delegation has already registered its views on the imperative for nuclear disarmament through the statement of the New Agenda Coalition delivered by Ambassador de Alba of Mexico. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) requires a sense of renewed ownership and energy from all of its States parties in support of its full implementation. We need to look for positive outcomes across the

Treaty's remit to ensure that the constructive start to the NPT review process will proceed to the achievement of concrete measurable progress at the next Review Conference, in 2010.

With this in mind, New Zealand will work with Chile, Nigeria, Sweden and Switzerland to introduce a draft resolution in the First Committee this year on lowering the operational status of nuclear weapons systems. This initiative builds upon the increased engagement evident on the issue of de-alerting from a broad range of States at both the NPT Preparatory Committee this year and during the Conference on Disarmament's discussions this year on nuclear disarmament.

We commend the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and its Director General, Mohamed ElBaradei, in verifying that nuclear energy programmes are for peaceful uses. It remains New Zealand's view that the additional protocol is the contemporary verification standard and as such should logically be a condition of nuclear supply.

New Zealand continues to be concerned about the questions that remain regarding Iran's nuclear programme. Iran's failure to comply fully with the provisions of Security Council and IAEA resolutions is disappointing. We continue to call on Iran to comply with those resolutions as a matter of priority. New Zealand's strong preference is for a peaceful, negotiated solution to this matter, and we call on Iran to do its part to realize that outcome.

New Zealand was deeply concerned at the decision of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in October last year to undertake a nuclear test. It is New Zealand's hope that recent progress achieved in the six-party plenary and working group process will be the first steps in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea returning to full compliance with its international obligations.

Eleven years have now passed since the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) was opened for adoption. As New Zealand stressed at the article XIV Conference in September this year, it is imperative that this Treaty enter into force. New Zealand remains fully committed to encouraging the universalization of the CTBT.

New Zealand welcomes the successful Biological Weapons Convention Review Conference, which gave

States the opportunity to agree on a structured intersessional programme and action plans. We were particularly pleased to see the formal establishment of an Implementation Support Unit with the endorsement of all States parties.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. This Convention retains an important position within the disarmament framework and enjoys almost universal support. We continue to emphasize that all chemical weapons stockpiles must be destroyed by 2012. The Review Conference in 2008 will give States the opportunity to develop practical steps to ensure that the Convention's implementation is relevant in the contemporary environment.

This year we commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Anti-personnel Mines-Ban Convention. States will need to work together in the lead up to the second Review Conference to ensure that the full implementation of the Convention is achieved. In particular, this will require close collaboration to assist those States experiencing challenges in working towards the completion of their mine clearance deadlines. New Zealand is committed to supporting the work of the Convention and will serve as co-Chair for victim assistance issues during 2008.

The launching of a dedicated international process on cluster munitions has been one of the stand-out achievements of this year. The Oslo Declaration in February set out specific, measurable and time-bound parameters to achieve a new convention by the end of 2008, which will address the humanitarian impact caused by cluster munitions. New Zealand will host a meeting of the Oslo process in Wellington next February. We hope that progress on cluster munitions will also be possible within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). We have been pleased to see a greatly increased level of engagement by CCW States over the past year on the issue of cluster munitions. There now seems to be universal recognition that cluster munitions pose a specific humanitarian risk and that serious consideration must be given to ways to respond to that risk. We welcome all efforts towards an outcome that addresses the harm that cluster munitions cause to civilians.

New Zealand deposited its instrument of acceptance to the CCW's Protocol on Explosive

Remnants of War last week. This reflects our commitment to ending the post-conflict death, injury and suffering that result from the wide range of unexploded and abandoned ordnance that remains after hostilities have ended. We welcomed the initiative of the Canadian and Swiss Governments to sponsor an informal meeting on transfers of small arms and light weapons. Risks to the sustainable development of developing countries are now widely recognized as one of the serious consequences of irresponsible trade in guns. We look forward to taking up this issue again at next year's Biennial Meeting of States.

We also very much welcome the new initiative announced by Ambassador Paranhos of Brazil on Monday for greater transparency and accounting regarding nuclear weapons. This new initiative also draws on the very useful discussion of the need for increased transparency regarding nuclear weapons that took place in the Conference on Disarmament and the NPT Preparatory Committee this year and which again drew support from a great many delegations.

In conclusion, we have come some way in 2007 but we still have much left to achieve. The early commencement of substantive negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament would provide a much-needed opportunity to develop collective leadership and achieve meaningful gains on disarmament and non-proliferation.

Renewed ownership and engagement in pursuit of positive outcomes from the NPT review cycle would allow us to make some concrete progress by 2010. The conclusion of a new international instrument on cluster munitions would qualitatively improve the protection of civilians in conflict situations and, as I mentioned, the new initiatives this year in the First Committee will obviously also contribute significantly to the First Committee's ability to contribute in these areas. New Zealand for its part is committed to working alongside other delegations in playing its part in these processes.

Mr. Sea (Cambodia): First, allow me warmly to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. My delegation wishes to extend its full support and cooperation to you; we are confident that under your able leadership our deliberations will be crowned with success.

Cambodia associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the members of the Non-Aligned Movement and with

the statement made by the representative of Myanmar on behalf of the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Nowadays we are successful in producing larger quantities of weapons of mass destruction, but we have been less successful in reducing them. My country is of the view that it is imperative for all States to fully comply with the existing legal instruments, particularly the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, in order to build a better and safer world for all.

Cambodia believes that the complete elimination of nuclear weapons is the only guarantee against their use and their proliferation. Being fully committed to counter the proliferation of all types of weapons of mass destruction, Cambodia has ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, and other important treaties relating to this issue. In this regard, we welcome the statement at the high-level meeting on the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, held last month, which reaffirmed the commitment of the States parties to achieve the principal objective of the Convention: to destroy their chemical weapons arsenals.

Cambodia and the other members of ASEAN have made consistent efforts to reduce the threat of nuclear weapons within the region as well as in other parts of the world. At the fortieth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, held in July this year, our Foreign Ministers emphasized the importance of the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty and discussed ways to enhance its effectiveness. The Ministers also welcomed the adoption of the regional Plan of Action, which will guide the future implementation of the Treaty so that we are able to respond to the evolving challenges on the spread of nuclear weapons.

Landmines remain a serious threat to many nations in the developing world, especially those emerging from war. These silent killers are not only a security problem. They also have a great impact on the economy and on development, as their effect constitutes a heavy economic and social burden both for Governments and for society. Despite full peace after years of conflict, Cambodia is still one of the most heavily mined countries in the world. Due to this fact, my Government considers mine clearance action as one of the highest priorities for the rehabilitation

and development of our nation. Furthermore, the Royal Government is carrying out its campaign by including demining operations in the relevant national agenda — the Cambodia Millennium Development Goals — and in the Rectangular Strategy of the Government. Up to July this year more than 1.5 million landmines had been cleared in my country.

To further explain the rationale of our activities on landmines, in March this year, Cambodia, in cooperation with Canada, hosted a conference entitled “Mine Action and Implications for Peace and Development”. The Conference is one of the worldwide events to mark the tenth anniversary of the Ottawa Mine-Ban Convention. Cambodia urges all States to become parties to the Convention and to take the bold step of renouncing landmines forever.

To share our experience with other countries that are also victims of landmines, Cambodia has for the second time dispatched a group of 135 deminers of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces to the Sudan to participate in mine clearance action under the umbrella of the United Nations peacekeeping operation there.

Small arms, though small in nature, carry big concerns to us all. We cannot underestimate the illegal use and circulation of small arms and light weapons, as they can be an equally dangerous source of terrorism, violence and regional conflicts. In this regard, my delegation is of the view that the 2001 United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons should remain the cornerstone of our work together to address the issue. In Cambodia, the Royal Government has developed a number of programmes ranging from law enforcement on arms control to the Weapons for Development programme, which have successfully led to the seizure and destruction of more than 200,000 small arms and light weapons. My delegation wishes to take this opportunity to express its deep appreciation to Japan, the European Union and other countries for their valuable assistance to these programmes.

Mr. Hoang Chi Trung (Viet Nam): Let me begin by congratulating you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your elections to your important posts as officers of the First Committee at the sixty-second session of the General Assembly. I am sure that under your guidance the Committee will arrive at a very satisfactory outcome. My delegation welcomes the appointment of Ambassador Sergio Duarte as the

Secretary-General’s High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. We wish him success in his new and important post.

The Vietnamese delegation fully associates itself with the statement delivered on Monday by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the statement presented yesterday by the representative of Myanmar on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

We all cherish peace and security. Disarmament plays a crucial role in consolidating world peace and security. General and complete disarmament, therefore, has been the objective of the United Nations since its birth. Yet our world today is still facing local wars and conflicts, terrorism and an arms race — a nuclear arms race in particular. Weapons of mass destruction and the development of their delivery systems continue to be of serious concern to the world community. This is even more worrisome when we face the danger of these weapons falling into the hands of the terrorists. It is also frustrating that little progress has been achieved in the field of disarmament in recent years.

All this demands that the Members of the United Nations redouble their efforts for the cause of disarmament. In that connection, we wish to reaffirm our strong commitment to work harder with other Member States towards the noble cause of total and complete disarmament, in particular the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction.

My country shares the view that the major challenge we face today is to strengthen the norms and regulations in the area of disarmament. Viet Nam has consistently supported all initiatives and efforts aimed at consolidating the instruments of arms control and disarmament. In this connection, we would like to underline the importance of the conclusion stated by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in its advisory opinion on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons* issued on 8 July 1996, that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is clearly the backbone of the global non-proliferation regime. Unquestionably, all States parties to the Treaty must comply fully with the

Treaty's obligations. We urge the nuclear-weapon States to undertake to implement the 13 practical steps contained in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference. We are also convinced that, pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, efforts to conclude a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States should be pursued as a matter of high priority. A new cycle of the review process has begun, and it is our sincere hope that the NPT States parties will make further concerted efforts to make it a meaningful exercise.

My country highly appreciates the role played by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and its safeguards system in consolidating and enhancing the verification system for the non-proliferation regime. Assistance to non-nuclear-weapon States in peaceful uses of nuclear energy constitutes an important obligation under the NPT. Furthermore, we wish to stress that the NPT has confirmed the right of countries to have access, without discrimination, to research on and the production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Based on our consistent policy of striving for peace, opposing the arms race and preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, Viet Nam signed the Additional Protocol to its Safeguards Agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency on 10 August 2007 and thus became the 114th State party to that important international instrument.

One of the few achievements we have recorded relating to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation was the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996. The Treaty promotes both nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation and constitutes an important instrument to preserve world peace and security. It is, however, very disappointing that more than a decade has elapsed and this important Treaty has not managed to enter into force. We support the efforts of the international community to make this happen at an early date.

Viet Nam strongly supports the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV). We share the sentiments of various delegations at the lack of consensus in the Open-ended Working Group set up by the General Assembly to consider its objectives and agenda, including the possibility of establishing a preparatory committee for SSOD-IV. We thus call upon the General

Assembly to reconvene the Working Group to find practical ways to hold the special session as soon as possible.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions of the world not only makes a significant contribution towards consolidating regional and international security, but also strengthens the NPT regime and the process of total nuclear disarmament. We are happy to note that more and more countries render support to this endeavour. It is our hope that the countries concerned will make efforts to implement the resolution adopted at the 1995 Review Conference so that the Middle East too will become a zone free of nuclear weapons.

At the regional level, Viet Nam is working closely with other ASEAN countries to ensure that South-East Asia will be a region free from nuclear weapons. It is our view that the participation of all nuclear-weapon States, through their accession to the Protocol of that Treaty, would be essential to further strengthen confidence-building measures between the nuclear-weapon States and South-East Asian countries. By doing so the nuclear-weapon States could further demonstrate their commitment to the NPT process, enhancing negative security assurances to the countries in the region. Viet Nam once again welcomes the announcement made by China of its readiness to accede to the Protocol annexed to the Treaty and calls upon other nuclear-weapon States to do likewise. At this session of the Committee, the countries in the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone will launch an effort to that effect, and we hope to enjoy the full support of all member countries.

Mr. Wunna Maung Lwin (Myanmar): On behalf of the Myanmar delegation and on my own account I wish to extend our warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. We also extend our tribute to the other members of the Bureau. We are confident that under your able leadership there will be a fruitful outcome. We assure you of our full support and cooperation in the discharge of your important task. My delegation joins others in welcoming the new High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Sergio Duarte, and wishes him success in his endeavours.

The Myanmar delegation associates itself with the statement of the representative of Indonesia,

speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), in the Committee on 8 October 2007.

Our endeavour to address the subject of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, continues to draw considerable attention from the international community. Together with the other States Members of this world body, we are striving to achieve the common goal of the disarmament agenda.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has been the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, and the lack of progress on implementing article VI, particularly in the light of the 2000 agreement on the 13 practical steps, is disappointing. The 2005 NPT Review Conference concluded without a substantive final document. Subsequently there was a lack of reference to nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation in the Outcome Document of the 2005 General Assembly World Summit. This year the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference was held in Vienna. We believe that the Preparatory Committee is a good start for the Review Conference. Myanmar has consistently maintained that the two processes of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are interrelated and mutually reinforcing.

The existence of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, continues to pose the greatest threat to mankind. In this alarming environment there are reports that large stocks of nuclear weapons continue to exist. Myanmar believes that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the threat of use of nuclear weapons. For that reason Myanmar has been introducing comprehensive draft resolutions to the First Committee over the past decade that call upon the nuclear-weapon States to undertake the step-by-step reduction of the nuclear threat with a view to achieving the total elimination of these weapons. At this session, Myanmar will again introduce a draft resolution on nuclear disarmament. We earnestly hope that it will continue to receive the broad support of Member States as similar draft resolutions have in previous years.

Myanmar has consistently stressed the importance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It has been more than 10 years since the CTBT was opened for

signature. It now enjoys near-universal support, as it has been signed by 177 States, of which 140 have ratified it. We call upon all States, particularly the remaining nuclear-weapon States, to ratify the CTBT as soon as possible. The Declaration adopted at the 2005 Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the launching of the third Joint Ministerial Statement of support for the CTBT, of 2006, and the Final Declaration of the fifth Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty held in September 2007 are positive developments in this area.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions of the world is a positive step towards attaining the objectives of global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. This year marks the tenth anniversary of the entering into force of the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. To commemorate this important anniversary, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) will be introducing a draft resolution entitled "Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (Bangkok Treaty)" during this session. Myanmar, together with other ASEAN member States, will be sponsoring that draft resolution. We invite member countries to support it.

Another issue that has serious implications for the peace and security of the world is the prevention of an arms race in outer space. This is a core issue of the Conference on Disarmament. Myanmar believes that the use of outer space by nations, for peaceful purposes or otherwise, is a common concern of every nation. The Conference on Disarmament has a primary role to play in addressing this important subject. Myanmar has been sponsoring the draft resolutions on the prevention of an arms race in outer space introduced by Egypt and Sri Lanka annually in the General Assembly for the past few years. Similarly, we have been supporting the draft resolutions on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities sponsored by the Russian Federation. These resolutions gained the broad support of Member States.

Myanmar supports the need to negotiate and conclude as soon as possible a legally binding international instrument to prevent the weaponization of outer space, as the existing instruments are inadequate to cover this issue comprehensively.

While emphasizing the need to address the question of weapons of mass destruction, we should not overlook the menace of small arms and light weapons. These weapons inflict serious casualties on hundreds of thousands of people each year. We place great importance on 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. The two core issues relating to the problem of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons — namely strict control over private ownership of small arms and the prevention of supplies of small arms to non-State groups — must be adequately addressed. Myanmar, together with other ASEAN members will work at both regional and international levels for the effective implementation of the Programme of Action.

On the work of the Conference on Disarmament, my delegation notes with regret that member States have thus far been unable to agree on a balanced and comprehensive programme of work. As the Conference on Disarmament is the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament, we sincerely hope that the parties concerned will demonstrate their commitment to the process of disarmament and exercise the political will to overcome this impasse.

This year's session of the First Committee coincides with a time when the Secretary-General is placing emphasis on revitalizing the international disarmament agenda. We welcome this move and commit ourselves to continue working towards the realization of disarmament.

Mr. Malmierca Díaz (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a great pleasure for me to see you, Sir, presiding over the work of the First Committee. I congratulate you on behalf of the delegation of Cuba on your election and wish you every success. These congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau.

Cuba fully supports the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on 8 October on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Committee is meeting for the first time since the changes introduced to the disarmament structures of the Secretariat. The Department for Disarmament Affairs has ceased to exist and the new Office for Disarmament Affairs has replaced it. For the first time a post of High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

has been created. I should like to take this opportunity to commend Mr. Sergio de Queiroz Duarte's tireless and excellent work since the very beginning of his tenure. The Secretary-General, in presenting his restructuring proposals to the General Assembly, stressed his intention to make disarmament one of his highest priorities. Thus we have reason to believe that the recent changes will help to facilitate progress on the important issues for which the First Committee is responsible and that the leading role of the United Nations in disarmament will be further strengthened.

While we are here making statements and pledging our commitment to peace and disarmament, the reality outside this room is quite different. Far from decreasing, military expenditures increase every year at an accelerated rate. Such expenditures have already reached a record \$1.204 trillion, 37 per cent more than 10 years ago. This is mainly a consequence of the dramatic growth in the United States military budget. That country alone spends on weapons the equivalent of what the rest of the world spends, and produces 63 per cent of all the weapons sold in the world. All of this is taking place in an international context increasingly marked by hegemony, unilateralism, interventionism — direct or covert — insecurity for the weakest countries and an attempt to validate the doctrine of pre-emptive force.

The sombre fact is that the goal of general and complete disarmament is now a pipe dream. Instead of nuclear disarmament — which is and will continue to be the top priority in the area of disarmament, as agreed by the United Nations almost 30 years ago — there has been a build-up of arms and wastage in terms of new weapons and armament systems. While resources are squandered in this way, some say hypocritically that there is no money to tackle the very serious problems stemming from poverty and marginalization that the world is facing. That is wholly untrue. With just 10 per cent of the current military expenditure, the Millennium Development Goals could be achieved. With the resources that are devoted to armaments today, the 852 million hungry people of the world could be fed for a year, or the 40 million HIV/AIDS patients could receive a 40-year supply of medicine.

Cuba proposes that at least half of current military expenditures be devoted to meeting the needs of economic and social development through a United Nations-managed fund. The countries of the

Non-Aligned Movement will once again submit to the Committee a draft resolution on the relationship between disarmament and development. We hope that the only country that voted against the draft resolution last year will reconsider its position.

Notwithstanding the proclaimed end of the cold war, there are still some 30,000 nuclear weapons in the world, and more than 12,000 of them are ready for immediate use. Nuclear weapons modernization programmes have not stopped. The mere existence of nuclear weapons and the doctrines that sanction their possession and use pose a grave danger to international peace and security. Cuba rejects the attempt by some to ignore or minimize the relevance of nuclear disarmament, and to impose instead a selective approach to non-proliferation by virtue of which the problem would lie not in the existence of nuclear weapons but in the good or bad behaviour of those who have them.

This year the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was held. The meeting was at least a space to exchange views. In other times perhaps that would not deserve any comment, but amid the current impasse and backward steps taken in the area of disarmament, many believe that having had the opportunity to talk is in itself a success. Cuba rejects the selective application of the NPT and wants to take the opportunity to commend the active and positive role played by the non-governmental organizations in this and other relevant meetings.

Issues relating to nuclear disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy cannot continue to be disregarded at the same time as horizontal non-proliferation is given priority. The inalienable right of States to the peaceful use of nuclear energy must be fully respected. The lack of progress in the implementation of the 13 practical steps agreed upon in the year 2000 must be reviewed by the First Committee without delay. Likewise, we must address the continued delay concerning a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States. We must carry out an in-depth review and take practical steps to prevent some countries from continuing to develop and use increasingly sophisticated and deadly conventional weapons. Nor can the Committee continue to ignore questions that raise legitimate concerns in the

international community, such as the use of arms and munitions containing depleted uranium.

As the Non-Aligned Movement has long been stating, it is essential to convene a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV). It cannot be put off any longer. The Open-ended Working Group on SSOD-IV convened this year. Unfortunately, it could not fulfil its mandate. The only country that voted against the draft resolution on this issue last year made very clear its opposition to the convening of SSOD-IV, thus thwarting any possibility of consensus. The non-aligned countries will be submitting a new draft resolution on this issue in the next few days. Let us hope that the United States will not continue, on its own, to oppose the rightful interests of the other 191 Member States.

I should like to conclude by reiterating the Cuban delegation's support and commitment to contributing to the fullest extent possible to successful work in the Committee.

Ms. Blum (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to begin by congratulating you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau, on your election to conduct the work of the First Committee. We are convinced that thanks to your professional and personal accomplishments we will be able to carry out our work effectively during the current session.

My delegation wishes also warmly to welcome the new High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ambassador Sergio de Queiroz Duarte, a representative of the Latin American region with an outstanding background in the field of disarmament. We wish him every success during his tenure at the helm of an Office of such importance in the Organization.

The general issues of greatest interest for my delegation have been amply discussed in this debate by the delegations of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and of the Dominican Republic on behalf of the Rio Group. Colombia fully associates itself with those two statements. We also associate ourselves with the statements to be delivered in the thematic debates of the First Committee by the delegation of Uruguay on behalf of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) and its associated States.

This being the first session of the General Assembly to be convened since the new Secretary-General took office on 1 January 2007, my delegation would also like to commend the strong impetus given by the Secretary-General to disarmament issues, especially through the reforms carried out in the former Department for Disarmament Affairs. We believe that the problems involved in disarmament deserve our full attention in the reform process in the Organization, and we applaud the results that are being achieved thanks to the changes currently in progress with the creation of the new Office for Disarmament Affairs. In this context, Colombia is also convinced of the need to revitalize the First Committee and to seek more effective results by rationalizing available time and resources in the framework of new methodological approaches.

The problems associated with the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons remain serious. Every year small arms take the lives of thousands of people all over the world, and there is still much that needs to be done in order to make progress in the strategies designed to prevent, combat and eradicate this grave scourge. The excessive accumulation and indiscriminate use of these weapons are a destabilizing factor in many regions. Several disarmament initiatives have proved beneficial, and Colombia can bear witness to that by mentioning the specific cases of cities such as Bogotá and Cali, where public campaigns in support of disarmament have led to a substantial decrease since the 1990s in the percentage of crimes committed using small arms and in the number of victims of those weapons.

I wish also to highlight the fact that this year Colombia has been coordinating the working group created in the context of the Geneva process on small arms and light weapons to help develop effective mechanisms and identify the needs of States, bearing in mind the existing resources for the implementation of the Plan of Action. We are confident that this valuable exercise, in which many Member States have been actively involved together with representatives of the Office for Disarmament Affairs and members of civil society, will promote further enrichment of the discussion and the exchange of views on this important issue.

At this session my delegation intends, together with Japan and South Africa, to introduce a draft resolution entitled "The illicit trade in small arms and

light weapons in all its aspects", texts similar to which have enjoyed the support of the overwhelming majority of member States in the past. At the last Assembly session a similar draft resolution obtained one of the highest numbers of positive votes of all First Committee draft resolutions. We are confident that delegations will continue to support the draft resolution.

Colombia reiterates its position on the need for a legally binding instrument on conventional weapons so as to permit the trade in small arms and light weapons to be monitored throughout its chain of production and distribution and to stop the diversion of such weapons into illicit channels. In this regard, my country has actively participated in the discussions concerning the negotiation of an arms trade treaty, and we have submitted our views on the matter to the Secretary-General. We are fully confident that the recently established Group of Governmental Experts will produce tangible results in this regard.

We acknowledge the work done in the Open-ended Working Group to consider the objectives and agenda, including the possible establishment of a preparatory committee, for a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV), and we commend Ambassador Alfredo Labbé of Chile for his tireless efforts as Chairman.

We believe that the issues considered in the meetings helped us to highlight once again the need to work together in order to reach consensus on this matter. The circumstances of today's world urgently require a new special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in the hope that we might obtain concrete results such as those obtained during the first special session back in 1978.

As regards nuclear-weapon-free zones, my delegation joins in commemorating the fortieth anniversary this year of the Treaty of Tlatelolco. This Treaty helped the Latin American and Caribbean region to become a pioneer among nuclear-weapon-free zones and has contributed to the stability of a large area of our planet. We believe that every initiative aimed at creating and consolidating new nuclear-weapon-free zones is a concrete step forward towards the common goal of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Colombia also commends the work of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and

the Caribbean, based in Lima, which, throughout its 30 years of existence, has promoted activities and strategies of tremendous importance for the States of the region.

My delegation will briefly address all other items on the agenda separately during the upcoming thematic debates.

Mr. Faria (Angola): I take this opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Committee and assure you of our full confidence in your wise and able leadership in achieving the Committee's goals, including the further strengthening of all disarmament machinery. My congratulations are also extended to Mr. Sergio Duarte, whose nomination to the post of High Representative for Disarmament Affairs we warmly applaud.

I particularly welcome the participation of representatives from the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the World Customs Organization. These international organizations play a crucial role in the implementation process, especially through their practical experience and lessons learned in the areas covered by Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and through their assistance programmes to facilitate the implementation of the resolution.

The adoption of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) was indeed a very important step forward in the fight against the threat to international peace and security caused by the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery. However, we share the view that if the implementation of this important resolution is to succeed, international, regional and subregional institutions have an important role to play in assisting developing countries in their implementation efforts.

We take advantage of this opportunity to reiterate our commitment to and support for promoting international stability. Furthermore, we are convinced that it is important to reinforce the monitoring of the application of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to move towards a global disarmament process and to discourage the new ongoing arms race.

Turning now to my own country, I would like to stress that the recent establishment of a national commission and other legal measures adopted by our

parliament is a clear sign that demonstrates the way the Government of Angola is committed to curbing the arms race.

The illicit traffic and proliferation of small arms and light weapons is also a matter of great international concern, particularly because of its linkage to armed conflicts, political destabilization and international and transnational organized crime. As a country recently emerging from a conflict situation, Angola has been following with concern the increasing threat to international peace and security caused by small arms. In this regard we consider that the illicit trade and proliferation of small arms and light weapons is a matter of international concern that we should face collectively.

Furthermore, as a country heavily affected by landmines, Angola places a high priority on demining and underlines the importance of assistance provided by the international community, including national and international non-governmental organizations engaged in education and the prevention of accidents caused by landmines, which have already affected thousands of people.

One of the lessons learned from our own experience as a country recently emerged from a conflict situation is the need for appropriate machinery to gather together donors and to translate pledges and political will into practice. In this connection I wish to express our gratitude for the international assistance we have received and hope that all donors will continue to respond positively to our needs.

To conclude, allow me to reiterate that my delegation aligns itself with the African common position with regard to the proliferation and illegal trafficking of light weapons, as well as with all international efforts to promote peace and stability, including through the non-proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery.

Mr. Mansour (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): First, on behalf of the Tunisian delegation, I would like to extend to you, Sir, and to your brotherly country, Senegal, my warmest congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I would also like to assure you of the support and cooperation of my delegation in the fulfilment of your mission to ensure the success of our work. We know that your talents and diplomatic experience will contribute to the

success of our work. I would also like to congratulate Mr. Sergio Duarte, and his country Brazil, on his appointment as High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as with that made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the African Group.

We are meeting at a critical time to consider progress made in the area of disarmament. My delegation wishes to emphasize the following main points. As the Committee is aware, Tunisia has always considered that the arms race is being conducted to the detriment of the most vital needs of civilian populations. It has always considered it wise to allocate resources devoted to military purposes to benefit development and economic growth activities. That being the case, it is important to emphasize that the difficulties that continue to exist and hamper the multilateral disarmament process should not in any way prevent us from believing that agreed multilateral solutions, in accordance with the Charter, continue to provide the best way to settle, in a lasting manner, numerous disarmament and international security issues.

The year 2007 saw the start of the preparatory process for the next Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), planned for 2010. Despite the so far modest results of the first session of the Preparatory Committee, held in Vienna last May, we continue to hope that the Committee's two forthcoming sessions will allow us to achieve a shared understanding regarding the major stumbling block resulting from the implementation of the NPT.

In that context, and in assessing nuclear disarmament over the past few decades, we must note the lack of significant progress in this area. Unfortunately, we are still very far from achieving the objectives set down in article VI of the NPT regarding nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. Here we recall the appeals made for the full implementation of commitments made unequivocally by nuclear-weapon States during the 2000 Review Conference to proceed to the complete elimination of their arsenals. It is also our hope that this promise will be kept through an accelerated negotiating process

designed to implement practical nuclear disarmament measures. For their part, the non-nuclear-weapon States have a right to benefit from the effective guarantees they make against the use or threat of use of these weapons.

In the same spirit, one of the major measures designed to put into effect the provisions of the NPT is the conclusion of negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The non-entry into force of this Treaty to date, 11 years after its adoption, is indeed of concern to us. There is thus a need to stress again the importance of the entry into force of this Treaty and the realization of its universality. That was the strong message sent by the meeting held on 17 and 18 September in Vienna, in which my delegation participated and which was devoted to facilitating the entry into force of the CTBT.

My delegation welcomes the impetus given to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva over the past two years to move the Conference from the deadlock which it has experienced. I take this opportunity to express to the Committee how greatly Tunisia values the honour given it to preside over the Conference on Disarmament in 2008. Here I wish to assure the Committee of the determination of my delegation to successfully guide the work of the Conference in order to take up the momentum to achieve agreement on a programme of work for the Conference in 2008. While on the subject, I would like to pay a particular tribute to Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, for his commitment and willingness to be of assistance in this framework.

Relaunching the disarmament process on a multilateral level is for us one of the major challenges of such importance to all of us collectively. In this context we believe that it is time to convene the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in order to identify the ways and means to relaunch the disarmament process at a multilateral level. We hope that the Open-ended Working Group on this question, which began last summer a three-session cycle of consultations, will reconvene and succeed in formulating recommendations to that end.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of freely concluded arrangements among the States of a specific region and the creation of zones free from all weapons of mass destruction are important means for advancing non-proliferation and

disarmament at both regional and international levels. In this framework the Middle East is one of the regions most deeply involved because of the refusal of certain parties to accede to the NPT and to place their nuclear installations under the full-scope safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and despite the many appeals of other States in the region, as well as the appeals of the General Assembly in its numerous resolutions on this issue. We call on the international community, particularly the most influential Powers, to take urgent and practical measures for the creation of such a zone.

Aware of the extraordinary importance of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and of its obvious implications on peace and international security, my country, which was quick to ratify this Convention and has completed the destruction of stockpiles of anti-personnel mines, hopes that all States parties will participate in this process to realize the objectives and universality of this Convention.

Likewise, we welcome the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and call for the implementation of its objectives and provisions, in particular regarding international cooperation in the area of activities in this field for peaceful purposes. In addition, we welcome the important progress made during the last Review Conference on the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, held at the end of 2006. It is our hope that the dynamic process begun during that Conference will lead to strengthening the Convention and the implementation of its objectives.

My country has been actively contributing to the efforts made by the countries of the Mediterranean region to face, in a global, coordinated and concerted manner, their shared challenges to make the Mediterranean basin a zone of dialogue, exchange and cooperation, thus guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity in the region. Also, faithful to its African connection, Tunisia, which has been making efforts to support the African Union and the establishment of its institutions, has been contributing since the 1960s to peacekeeping operations throughout the world. It has a

presence in particular in Africa through its participation in numerous peacekeeping operations on the continent.

In conclusion, I should like to take this opportunity to emphasize that Tunisia will continue to play its part in the cause of peace and disarmament. We reiterate our readiness to cooperate fully with you, Mr. Chairman, and the members of the Bureau, while wishing the work of the Committee every success.

Ms. Jahan (Bangladesh): Let me begin by congratulating you, Sir, and your Bureau upon your well-deserved election. I am confident that under your able leadership the work of the Committee will see a successful outcome. We also congratulate Ambassador Sergio Duarte on his appointment as High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

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

Bangladesh believes that the greatest threat to humanity comes from the continued existence of weapons of mass destruction. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) are the cornerstones of the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime. We must ensure full universality of the NPT, the CTBT and other international instruments, without a single exception. It is a matter of great regret that although the NPT process began in 1968 with great expectations, it has not been able to live up to them. The Treaty, signed by almost all the countries of the world, provides a guarantee that while the non-nuclear nations would forgo building nuclear weapons, the nuclear nations would divest themselves of their own nuclear weapons. However, the lack of political will of a few has cast a shadow over the prospect of making the world a safer place. Similarly for the CTBT, there has been little development in the past few years.

We are nonetheless heartened to see some glimmers of hope. We are confident that, given the will, it is possible to build on the outcome of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference, held in Vienna earlier this year. However, we need to reinvigorate our efforts in earnest to ensure the Treaty's continuing relevance and strength. We wish to stress that article IV of the NPT

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

Bangladesh is constitutionally committed to disarmament and non-proliferation. Accordingly, our disarmament and non-proliferation records are impeccable. We have consciously and unconditionally decided to remain non-nuclear. Bangladesh is the first Annex 2 nation in South Asia to have signed and ratified the CTBT. We are party to almost all disarmament-related treaties, including the NPT, the CTBT, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC) the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW), the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. We have also concluded a safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), including the additional protocols. This is tangible testimony to our unwavering commitment to the goal of disarmament.

This year we commemorated the tenth anniversary of the CCW. As one of the early signatory and ratifying States of this Convention, Bangladesh has never pursued the production, procurement or use of chemical and biological weapons. Indeed, we have always condemned the use of such weapons of mass destruction against mankind and the environment. Bangladesh has always supported the efforts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to make the Convention comprehensive, non-discriminatory, verifiable and ultimately a universal instrument for the elimination of chemical weapons from the world.

We are concerned that a large number of civilians, including women and children, still fall victim to anti-personnel landmines in conflict and post-conflict situations around the world. We call upon those States that have not yet done so to become

parties to the Mine Ban Treaty. We wish to state that Bangladesh has destroyed all its stockpiles of landmines in fulfilment of its Treaty commitment. We urge the international community to provide assistance in landmine clearance operations and in rehabilitating the victims.

Bangladesh continues to believe that a fissile material cut-off treaty is ripe for negotiation. It is our expectation that in the forthcoming session the Conference on Disarmament will begin negotiations and conclude an agreement on the complete elimination of such materials.

We are also concerned at the continued development and deployment of anti-ballistic missile defence systems and the pursuit of advanced military technologies capable of being deployed in outer space. Bangladesh reiterates its call for the resumption of work on the prevention of an arms race in outer space within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament. Bangladesh strongly believes in regional approaches to nuclear disarmament. Confidence-building measures through the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones can contribute significantly to this goal. We welcome the recent creation of the Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone by five Central Asian States and appreciate all other existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and call for the establishment of similar zones in South Asia, the Middle East and other parts of the world.

The nuclearization of South Asia is of particular concern to my country. We urge India and Pakistan to relinquish their nuclear option and join the NPT. Israel must also do the same in the Middle East. We believe that the recent trend of bilateral agreements on the civilian use of nuclear energy should not in any way hinder the cause of regional disarmament. We call for universal access to the comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols as these have so far had a deterrent effect on nuclear proliferation.

Bangladesh strongly believes that there should be a control mechanism to prevent the spread of conventional arms. An effective arms trade treaty will ensure a responsible transfer of conventional weapons. As a country committed to disarmament and non-proliferation, Bangladesh will extend all possible cooperation towards the successful conclusion of such a treaty.

It is appalling that global military expenditures have been rising steadily for the past couple of years. In 2006 the world spent \$1.12 trillion for military purposes only. Such mindless expenditures are the result of a frantic arms race that is increasingly having a negative impact on our development agenda. We urge all countries, particularly the major military Powers, to divert part of these resources to poverty alleviation in developing countries. Such a move would greatly advance the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, by 2015.

Bangladesh hopes that, at this session, the First Committee will play its due role in strengthening the international peace and security regime. Before concluding, allow me to reaffirm our commitment to working with you, Mr. Chairman, and other representatives towards that end.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first to express the pleasure of the Algerian delegation at seeing the representative of a fraternal African country, Senegal, chairing the First Committee, and the pleasure also of seeing the chair being filled by you personally Sir. Your experience and talents, of which we are all well aware, will obviously contribute to enabling our work to achieve the success we hope to see. I assure you and the members of the Bureau of our full and complete cooperation. I also wish to pay a tribute to Ambassador Mona Juul for the outstanding efforts she made in guiding the work of the Committee at its previous session. I also wish to welcome the presence of Ambassador Sergio Duarte, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, and wish him every success in his new post. My delegation will be sure to fully support him.

My delegation associates itself fully with the declaration made by the delegation of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement as well as the statement that will be made later by the delegation of Nigeria on behalf of the African Group.

The present session seems to be following the same pattern as previous sessions of the General Assembly. It is opening once again with a number of questions that again underscore legitimate concerns given the deadlock facing the multilateral disarmament enterprise and characterized by the appearance of new threats which have never been as urgent or as worrisome for the entire international community.

In this context the maintenance of international peace and security is a shared challenge for the entire international community. We need to pool our efforts to create together the prerequisites for beginning a fundamental change in attitudes designed to lay down the basis for the system of collective security that we all hope to see. Such a challenge, as we see it, requires dedication to the advancement of the norm of law and the restoration of the multilateral framework for disarmament negotiations. Here the Conference on Disarmament is an ideal forum to provide comprehensive and lasting solutions to questions of disarmament and non-proliferation. So too this challenge hinges on the implementation of commitments we have jointly made in the area of disarmament and the complete elimination of weapons of mass destruction, the sole real guarantee of security for all. In that connection it is relevant to recall the nuclear disarmament platform, whose 13 measures, adopted during the Sixth NPT Review Conference, constitute the structure agreed on by all States parties to the Treaty.

We wish to emphasize the need to adopt as quickly as possible a balanced programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament that would deal with issues of a treaty on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, the prevention of an arms race in outer space, and security guarantees.

At a time when the Disarmament Commission has completed its work on a note of hope, I would like to share with the Committee the wish to see a relaunching of the multilateral disarmament mechanism. Today more than ever resort to the virtues of negotiation and concerted action must be pursued in order to achieve disarmament and an era of peace and collective security.

The creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones, recognized and created on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at, is designed to strengthen international peace and security. It is an effective means that clearly contributes to the achievement of the goals of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation and of an important confidence-building measure at a regional level. My delegation believes that it is encouraging to see that nuclear-weapon-free zones have been established in Latin America and the Caribbean, the South Pacific, Central Asia, South-East Asia, and Africa, which have considerably reduced the risks of

nuclear proliferation and have contributed to strengthening international peace and security.

Algeria, which was an active contributor to the drafting and adoption of the Treaty of Pelindaba, in Africa, which it ratified in 1998, continues to be deeply concerned by the lack of progress in the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Algeria urges the international community to send a strong signal to require Israel to abide by international law and to remove the main — indeed the only — barrier to this important objective, and thus to contribute to the strengthening of peace and stability in that highly sensitive region of the world.

Algeria has made dialogue and concerted action a basic principle of its foreign policy, the linchpin for its action within the framework of strengthening regional and international security. It is firmly resolved to fulfil all its commitments under regional and international instruments to which it is party. It will spare no efforts in the context of the regional and multilateral forums in which it participates to support and advance initiatives designed to relaunch the disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation processes and arms control.

It is in that spirit that my country, after having recently hosted the inaugural ceremony for the anti-personnel mines observatory, this year hosted two workshops on the Chemical Weapons Convention. The first dealt with customs aspects in North Africa and the Sahel, while the second was devoted to the universality of this international instrument. A ceremony marking the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention was held on the eve of the opening of the work of that Review Conference.

Motivated by the wish to make its contribution to peace and security initiatives in the Mediterranean region, my delegation considers it an honour and a pleasure this year once again to submit for consideration by the First Committee a draft resolution on strengthening security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region.

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

Mr. Owade (Kenya): Let me begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your well-deserved election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I wish to assure you of the Kenya delegation's full support and cooperation in our common endeavour to ensure a

fruitful session. Let me also congratulate Mr. Sergio Duarte on his well-deserved appointment as the Secretary-General's High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and thank him for the very inspiring statement that he made at the beginning of the session (see A/C.1/62/PV.2). We are confident that the disarmament machinery will benefit from his wealth of experience and his distinguished career in multilateral diplomacy.

We associate ourselves fully with the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the one to be made by Nigeria on behalf of the African Group.

Kenya remains firmly committed to all efforts aimed at strengthening the disarmament machinery with a view to achieving general and complete disarmament. Despite the setbacks over the past couple of years, we cannot afford to give up efforts to rid the world of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Kenya believes that multilateralism in the disarmament agenda is the only viable path to a peaceful and secure future free of nuclear weapons.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone for the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We welcome the progress made at the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference, which was held in Vienna in May, and we look forward to useful engagement by all parties in a bid to move the process to a meaningful outcome. We reiterate our well-known position that the NPT was a bargain in which the non-nuclear-weapon States swore not to acquire nuclear weapons while the nuclear-weapon States would eliminate their stockpiles. The three pillars of the NPT — disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy — must be given equal and balanced treatment on the basis of non-selectivity.

The decisions reached at last year's meeting of States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention are encouraging and inspire hope in other areas of disarmament.

The relationship between disarmament and development cannot be over-emphasized. The two are indeed inextricably linked. It is sad to note that precious resources continue to be directed towards military expenditure at the expense of development. The former Secretary-General of the United Nations,

Mr. Kofi Annan, vividly established this linkage in his seminal work "In Larger Freedom" (A/59/2005), in which he made it abundantly clear that there can be no development without security and no security without development. The ultimate guarantee of human rights presupposes development and security.

At the risk of stating the obvious, I wish to assert that security cannot be guaranteed by individual States in isolation. It requires concerted efforts. It is for this reason that multilateralism must be given priority by the international community.

In this connection we underline the role of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva as the single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament treaties. As a member of the Conference, Kenya has been concerned at the lack of progress at the Conference for close to a decade. We hope that the tremendous efforts made by the Six Presidents at the 2007 session will soon bear fruit so that the Conference will be able to embark on substantive negotiations on a programme of work based on the principle of balance and non-selectivity.

Kenya joins the call for the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

Conventional weapons continue to have a devastating impact, especially in developing countries. Kenya reaffirms its support to the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. In this connection we welcome the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on illicit brokering. Kenya continues to play a key role among the countries of Eastern Africa and the Horn of Africa that are signatories to the Nairobi Declaration on the problem of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa. The Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons has done considerable work in harmonizing and coordinating the activities of member States in the reduction of small arms and light weapons. We are grateful to partner States that continue to support the Centre in its noble objectives.

Kenya is proud to have been among the original co-authors of the draft resolution on the arms trade treaty that was adopted by an overwhelming 153 States at the sixty-first session (resolution 61/89). We are encouraged by the responses of Member States to the

Secretary-General's request, and we look forward to participating in the work of the group of governmental experts towards the conclusion of a legally binding instrument that would ensure responsible trade in small arms. We support the initiatives taken by a number of States to advance the objectives of the Programme of Action. It is for this reason that Kenya joined other States in adopting the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development on 7 June 2006. Kenya has since been an active member of the core group in Geneva to advance the goals of the Declaration.

In this regard, the Government of Kenya, together with the Government of Switzerland and in close collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), will be hosting the African Regional Meeting on Armed Violence and Development in Nairobi on 30 and 31 October 2007. We hope that those African States that have not yet adopted the Geneva Declaration will do so and rededicate themselves to its realization.

In conclusion, I wish to call on all delegations to work together in a spirit of cooperation so that we can together achieve the noble objectives expected of us by the international community. The stakes are high, but together we can succeed. Kenya will lend its support.

Mr. Obisakin (Nigeria): On behalf of the African Group I wish to congratulate you, Ambassador Paul Badji, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee at this sixty-second session of the General Assembly. We would equally like to felicitate Ambassador Sergio Duarte on his recent appointment as the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. Through you, Sir, the African Group wishes also to convey its congratulations to the other members of the Bureau. We are confident that you will bring your experience in the field of disarmament to steer the work of the Committee and its proceedings to a successful conclusion. The African Group hereby assures you of its unflinching support and unalloyed cooperation in addressing the tasks ahead of us.

The African Group reaffirms its belief in the promotion of international peace and stability based on the principles of undiminished security for all States. The Group remains strong in its commitment to the achievement of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. The Group will continue to pursue the goals of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in all

its aspects until that noble objective is attained. We call on all delegations to demonstrate the necessary political will to enhance progress on the issue of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The African Group remains convinced that nuclear weapons pose the greatest danger to mankind and its civilization. It is therefore imperative that the international community should agree on the commencement without further delay of multilateral negotiations leading to the early conclusion of a convention prohibiting the development, production, testing, deployment, stockpiling, transfer, threat of use or use of nuclear weapons and on their total elimination. In order to realize this objective, the Group calls on nuclear-weapon States to commit themselves to stopping the qualitative improvement, development, production and stockpiling of nuclear warheads and their delivery systems.

Pending the total elimination of those weapons, a legally binding international instrument should be established under which nuclear-weapon States undertake not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. The African Group stresses the importance of ensuring that any nuclear disarmament process be irreversible, transparent and verifiable in order for it to be meaningful and effective.

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

The African Group welcomes the successful conclusion of the first session of the Preparatory Committee in the NPT review process and reaffirms its belief in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a vital instrument in the maintenance of international peace and security. The Group endorses the 13 practical steps adopted at the 2000 NPT Review Conference for systematic and

progressive efforts to implement the unequivocal commitment undertaken by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament in keeping with article VI of the Treaty. The Group wishes to express its regret at the failure of the 2005 NPT Review Conference to produce a meaningful outcome.

The African Group reiterates its long-standing support for the total elimination of all nuclear testing. The Group stresses the significance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), including by all nuclear-weapon States, which, among other things, should contribute to the process of nuclear disarmament. In that connection, the Group endorses the Declaration adopted at the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty that took place in New York from 21 to 23 September 2005. Pending the entry into force of the Treaty it is important that the moratorium on nuclear-weapon test explosions, or explosions of any other nuclear device, be maintained. The Group welcomes the recent increase in the number of signatures and ratifications of the Treaty.

The African Group emphasizes the importance of strengthening existing multilateral arms control and disarmament agreements by ensuring full compliance with, and effective implementation of, those agreements, including their universality. The Group also reaffirms its strong belief in strengthening the existing disarmament machinery as a means of advancing the process of nuclear disarmament.

In that connection the African Group welcomes the progress noticed in the work of the Conference on Disarmament and expresses the hope that an agreement will be reached to begin substantive work. The Group calls on the Conference on Disarmament to agree on a work programme as soon as possible so that substantive negotiations can start.

The Group reiterates its support to the ongoing cycle in the Disarmament Commission and hopes for its successful conclusion during the 2008 session. It encourages the chairmen of its working groups to continue their efforts in order to reach consensus on the outcome documents of the cycle.

The African Group reiterates its support for the concept of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones established on the basis of arrangements

freely arrived at among the States of the regions concerned. The Group further endorses the Declaration adopted at the Conference of States Parties and Signatories to Treaties that Establish Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones held in Tlatelolco, Mexico from 26 to 28 April 2005. We call for the ratification of the Treaty of Pelindaba and its Protocols on the establishment of an African nuclear-weapon-free zone by the required number of States so that the Treaty can enter into force without further delay.

The African Group calls on States to take appropriate measures to prevent any dumping of nuclear, chemical or radioactive wastes that would infringe on the sovereignty of States. In that regard, the Group recalls the 1991 resolution of the Council of Ministers of the African Union Commission regarding the Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa. The Group also calls for the effective implementation of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Code of Practice on the International Transboundary Movement of Radioactive Waste as a means of enhancing the protection of all States from the dumping of radioactive wastes on their territories.

The African Group wishes to restate its belief, as also recognized in the outcome document, in the full implementation 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 as a key element in promoting long-term security and for creating conditions for sustainable development in many developing countries, especially those in Africa. The Group calls for the holding of the next biennial review meeting in 2008. The Group made a significant contribution to the agreement reached on the final text of a draft international instrument on tracing illicit small arms and light weapons.

Cognizant of the fact that illicit arms brokering plays a significant role in the trade in illicit arms, the African Group calls for the establishment of an effective international regime on illicit brokering. To achieve the desired results it is imperative that the international community deal with the threat posed by the illicit small arms trade in a comprehensive and action-oriented manner.

The African Group welcomes the outcome of the first Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention on

anti-personnel landmines, which took place in Nairobi from 29 November to 3 December 2004, and, in line with the outcome document, calls on States parties to the Convention to fully implement their obligations under that instrument.

Finally, the African Group reaffirms its belief that regional centres for peace and disarmament can play an important role in promoting peace, security, arms control and disarmament. However, it notes with regret that the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa has been constrained by inadequate operational funds. The Group welcomes the conclusions of the consultative mechanism established for the reorganization of the Regional Centre and for its optimum performance.

Mr. Almansoor (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me first to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee at the sixty-second session of the General Assembly. We place confidence in your wisdom and skill to guide the work of the Committee successfully. We should also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their elections to their posts.

Before addressing a number of disarmament and non-proliferation issues, I wish to applaud and support the statement made by Mr. Sergio Duarte, the Secretary-General's High Representative for Disarmament Affairs (see A/C.1/62/PV.2).

Disarmament and non-proliferation are priority issues for the United Nations, because their purpose is to achieve worldwide peace and security. In recent years we have increasingly witnessed attempts by States to secure nuclear weapons technology. We have expressed concern about the possibility of such weapons being acquired by terrorists and the spread of terror that this would entail. This would in turn undermine global stability.

In this regard, the Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms the need to achieve universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) without hobbling it with exemptions of any kind, and to ensure compliance with its provisions. Non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty have the right to immediate, unconditional and legally binding security assurances.

The Kingdom of Bahrain attaches great importance to disarmament and has thus acceded to a large number of international conventions and treaties

concerning all aspects and all forms of disarmament. My country recently joined the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), totally convinced of the vital role the Agency plays in strengthening the system of nuclear non-proliferation.

We are also mindful of the need to free the Middle East region of weapons of mass destruction, including in the Gulf States. We call on the international community and the United Nations to bring pressure to bear on Israel to comply with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Israel is the only State in the region that has not yet signed the NPT. It is imperative that Israel subject its nuclear facilities to the IAEA safeguards regime, in keeping with the resolution adopted at the 1995 Treaty Review and Extension Conference, and in the context of an agreement on the indefinite extension of the Treaty and on establishing a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East. But that important resolution has yet to be implemented.

With regard to the Iranian nuclear issue, Bahrain calls for the utmost effort to achieve a peaceful solution through direct negotiations with Iran to spare the Arabian Gulf region further tension of the kind it has endured for the past 25 years. We call on the Islamic Republic of Iran to demonstrate more transparency and further cooperation with the IAEA under the NPT so as to reassure the international community and neighbouring States about the peaceful intentions of the Iranian nuclear programme. The Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms the right of all States to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes under IAEA supervision.

Our world today is witnessing many armed conflicts as a result of the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, which are now more sophisticated than ever.

These small and light weapons are a source of instability and insecurity in many countries around the world. They are a source of vital concern for the international community. 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, is an important political framework which should be acted upon by all States in view of its importance for States that have experienced this dangerous and unsettling phenomenon.

We welcome the special interest shown by the Secretary-General in revitalizing the programme of work on disarmament and non-proliferation. The restructuring of the Department for Disarmament Affairs has taken place and the High Representative of the Secretary-General has been appointed for the same purpose. This is a significant step that we should endorse in order to enhance the ability of the Office for Disarmament Affairs to present constructive ideas that will prompt Member States to take effective and positive steps in the area of disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament. We are convinced that international cooperation is needed to put an end to weapons of mass destruction and that that issue will continue to be an important objective of the international community in order to free the world of conflict and war and to create a world based on peaceful coexistence for future generations that may enjoy peace, security and prosperity around the world.

The meeting rose at 1.35 p.m.