



General Assembly

Sixty-third session

First Committee

3rd meeting

Tuesday, 7 October 2008, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

Chairperson: Mr. Marco Antonio Suazo (Honduras)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda items 81 to 96 (continued)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

Mr. U Wunna Maung Lwin (Myanmar): I have the honour and privilege to take the floor on behalf of the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN): Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam and my own country, Myanmar.

At the outset, I wish to extend our warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your unanimous election as Chairperson of the First Committee. We also pay tribute to the other members of the Bureau. I assure you of the fullest support of the ASEAN delegations.

ASEAN places a high priority on nuclear disarmament in the maintenance of international peace and security and stresses its concern at the threat to humanity posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons and of their possible use or threat of use. Several initiatives have been taken by ASEAN in that regard.

The ASEAN countries reaffirm their support for the unanimous conclusion of the International Court of Justice, in its Advisory Opinion of 8 July 1996, that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective

international control. In that regard, the ASEAN countries continue to support and intend to co-sponsor the draft resolution tabled every year by Malaysia, reaffirming the importance of that ruling.

For a number of years, the ASEAN countries have co-sponsored the yearly draft resolution initiated by Myanmar. The resolution urges the nuclear-weapon States to cease immediately the qualitative improvement, development, production and stockpiling of nuclear warheads and their delivery systems. It also urges the nuclear-weapon States, as an immediate measure, to de-alert and deactivate their nuclear weapons and to take other concrete measures to further reduce the operational status of their nuclear weapon systems. It also calls for the convening of an international conference on nuclear disarmament in all its aspects at an early date in order to identify and to deal with concrete measures of nuclear disarmament.

A resolution on the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone was for the first time introduced and adopted by the General Assembly last year as resolution 62/31. The biennial resolution was sponsored by all ASEAN countries. The resolution encourages nuclear-weapon States and States parties to the Treaty to continue to work constructively with a view to ensuring the early accession of the nuclear-weapon States to the Protocol to the Treaty.

Those draft resolutions manifest ASEAN members' commitment to the cause of disarmament. This year, Malaysia and Myanmar, with the support of the ASEAN and other sponsors, will reintroduce them.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.



It is our ardent hope that the draft resolutions will enjoy broad support and increased sponsorship.

We emphasize the importance of the full and non-selective implementation of the three pillars of the regime set forth by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) — nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy — and we welcome the positive and substantive outcome of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty. The ASEAN countries recall the unequivocal undertaking of the nuclear-weapon States to pursue negotiation in good faith, particularly on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, to which all States parties are committed under article VI of the Treaty.

We reiterate our view that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. We therefore call once again for the full and effective implementation of the 13 practical steps set out in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. In that connection, we reaffirm our conviction that there exists an urgent need for the nuclear-weapon States to take concrete measures to fulfil their obligations under the NPT.

We regret that the 2005 NPT Review Conference, held in New York in May of that year, did not achieve any substantive result. In view of that, it is imperative that the preparatory process for the 2010 NPT Review Conference lead to a substantive outcome. ASEAN reaffirms its position on that subject and urges all States Members of the United Nations to work towards a consensus to address the common threat posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons. We urge all the parties concerned to demonstrate their political will to overcome their differences and work for concerted action on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The ASEAN countries have consistently stressed the importance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and to the NPT. We reiterate our call to the nuclear-weapon States to make further efforts towards the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

We welcome the Final Declaration of the fifth Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, held in Vienna in September 2007, which called on those

States that had not done so to sign and ratify the Treaty without delay. The Treaty now enjoys near universal support. To date, 179 countries have signed the Treaty and more than 80 per cent of those have ratified it. We wish to encourage all States, particularly the remaining States whose ratification is required for entry into force, to ratify the Treaty. In that regard, we took note of the joint ministerial statement on the CTBT issued in New York on 24 September 2008.

We continue to believe that the concerns related to missile proliferation are best addressed through multilaterally negotiated, comprehensive and non-discriminatory agreements. We will work together with Member States to contribute to the United Nations endeavours to address the issue of missiles in all its aspects by identifying areas where consensus can be reached.

Chemical and biological weapons also pose a serious threat to mankind. As the Chemical Weapons Convention has a vital role in countering the challenge posed by those weapons, the ASEAN is encouraged to note that 184 States, representing 98 per cent of the global population, have acceded to the Convention. ASEAN invites all States that have not yet signed or ratified it to do so as soon as possible. We also call on States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction as soon as possible.

The ASEAN countries remain deeply concerned by the illicit transfer, manufacture and circulation of small arms and light weapons and their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions.

We recognize the need to establish and maintain control over private ownership of small arms. We call on States, in particular major producing States, to ensure that the supply of small arms and light weapons is limited to Governments, or entities duly authorized by Governments, and to implement legal restrictions preventing the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons with non-State actors.

We reiterate our call on all States to support the 2001 Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and welcome the final outcome document of the Third Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the

Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

We take note that the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction has been ratified and acceded to by 156 countries.

ASEAN has taken initiatives that have significantly contributed to peace and security in the region. Among them was the establishment of the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone. ASEAN encourages the nuclear-weapon States to accede to the Protocol to the Zone as soon as possible. The accession of nuclear-weapon States to the Treaty establishing the Zone will further strengthen disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, thereby enhancing regional peace and security. We believe that the nuclear-weapon-free zones created by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok, Pelindaba and Semipalatinsk, as well as Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status, contribute to strengthening global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.

The importance of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament cannot be overemphasized. While the Conference was able to conduct important thematic debates on all items on the agenda, it is regrettable that it has not yet been able to reach consensus on a programme of work. It is our hope that the States concerned will demonstrate their commitment to the process of disarmament and exercise political will to overcome that deadlock.

ASEAN has been making important contributions to regional peace and security. We recall the signing of the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II at the ninth ASEAN summit, held in Bali, Indonesia, in 2003, which decided to establish an ASEAN Community comprising three pillars: political and security, economic and sociocultural cooperation. That is in line with ASEAN Vision 2020, which envisages ASEAN as a community of nations bonded together in partnership in dynamic development and in a community of caring societies.

We also recall the adoption by the ASEAN leaders of the Vientiane Action Programme, the ASEAN Security Community Plan of Action and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Plan of Action, as

well as the signing of the ASEAN Framework Agreement for the Integration of Priority Sectors and the progress made in the implementation of programmes and projects building up to the realization of the ASEAN Community, as enshrined in Bali Concord II.

The ASEAN countries continue to attach special importance to confidence-building measures among participants in the ASEAN Regional Forum. The activities of the Forum have contributed to political stability, security and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia is an instrument of peace, security and cooperation in inter-State relations. To date, 13 countries outside ASEAN have acceded to it. Those accessions testify to the continued relevance of the Treaty in contributing to regional peace, security and stability. In that context, we welcome Turkey's letter of intent to accede to the Treaty. It is our hope that other external partners will do so in the near future.

In conclusion, we once again renew our commitment to multilateralism as an important means of pursuing and achieving our common objectives in the field of disarmament and our determination to further promote multilateralism in that respect. It is now more urgent than ever for us, the international community, to strive for international peace and security and to redouble our efforts and live up to our commitments to the goal of creating a nuclear-weapon-free world.

We, the ASEAN countries, once again reaffirm our determination to work cooperatively to achieve those goals as a matter of utmost priority.

Mr. Percaya (Indonesia): On behalf of the Indonesian delegation, allow me first to extend to you, Mr. Chairperson, my warmest congratulations on your election to chair the First Committee session this year. I am confident that, under your able leadership, our Committee will achieve a successful and productive outcome.

Indonesia associates itself with the statements made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

The global situation remains uncertain, with serious differences and the existence of conflict in many parts of the world. The situation is worsening

with the financial crisis and its contagion spreading far and wide, on the one hand, while the huge military expenditure of major Powers continue unabated, on the other. We continue to be concerned by the advancement of armament at the cost of development, particularly when a staggering 1.4 billion people continue to struggle in extreme poverty.

Despite some earnest efforts by many Member States, including non-Governmental actors, the disarmament machinery, regrettably, remains mired in deadlock and a lack of consensus on some of the fundamental and previously agreed points on the global disarmament agenda.

The signs are bleak. After more than a decade, the Conference on Disarmament has not been able to agree on its programme of work, even after intense efforts by its Presidents. It is also unfortunate that, after the end of the three-year cycle, the 2008 session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission ended without substantive recommendations.

Similarly, the Open-ended Working Group on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament could not reach agreement on the objectives and agenda of the special session, despite a lot of hard work. And, after the failure of the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the two meetings of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference have for the most part dealt with procedural matters rather than substantive work.

However, we see a ray of hope. Momentum is emerging as a result of the creative work by a group of States and eminent individuals towards achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. The outcome of the International Conference on Nuclear Disarmament, organized by Norway in Oslo last February, is promising. The adoption of the Convention on Cluster Munitions at the Dublin Diplomatic Conference last May was heartening. The establishment and the announcement of the composition of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, initiated by the Prime Minister of Australia in September, were also encouraging.

It is vital for the sustainable peace and security of our planet that we persevere for a global security order in which nuclear weapons will no longer play a role. Today, we are more convinced than ever that nuclear

disarmament is imperative for international peace and welfare. We are faced with the dangers of nuclear weapons finding their way into more military arsenals and the risk that those old tools of deterrence might become new tools for terrorists, with devastating consequences.

Non-proliferation is vital, but it is not sufficient. Nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament are mutually reinforcing and both must be pursued vigorously in a balanced and non-discriminatory manner. Otherwise, we might soon enter a new nuclear arms race with new types, uses and rationales for such weapons and, eventually, more warheads.

The NPT as the primary instrument for controlling and eliminating nuclear weapons risks falling apart, which could pose further proliferation risks. It is extremely concerning that, instead of eliminating nuclear weapons, some nuclear Powers have plans to modernize or develop new types of nuclear weapons or create new rationales for their use.

While attempts to bring those outside the regime are commendable, we believe that they should be conducted in a way that reinforces rather than undermines global non-proliferation norms. In that context, we deeply regret the decision made by the 45 States members of the Nuclear Suppliers Group to grant an unconditional specific waiver on nuclear export guidelines to States outside the NPT. With that decision, what incentive remains for other States to join the Treaty? We believe that the decision is likely to do more harm than good to the non-proliferation regime and to invalidate warnings to others to abandon their nuclear ambitions. It will also create more problems than solutions for our efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation at the global and regional levels.

On the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), despite the considerable decline in the number of countries under Annex 2, there are deeply disturbing signs pointing in the opposite direction. Instead of working towards the entry into force of the CTBT, two nuclear-weapon States that were among the first to sign the Treaty have not yet ratified it. There is also no positive indication on the part of the three NPT non-State parties that they intend to sign the Treaty. For its part, Indonesia is seriously undertaking preparations for the ratification of the CTBT, with the involvement of our national stakeholders.

Meanwhile, talks and negotiations on a verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) should start immediately either in the Conference on Disarmament or under the NPT. The treaty would ban the existing stocks and future production of key components of nuclear weapons, enriched uranium and plutonium. That would form a cornerstone in the nuclear disarmament process. We believe that the call of the United States to negotiate a FMCT without verification is in direct contravention of the position of all members of the Conference on Disarmament, as signified by the Shannon mandate.

In order to realize systematic and progressive efforts for nuclear disarmament, renewed negotiation between the United States and Russia, as the largest possessors of the world's nuclear weapons, is required. It is important to point out that, while the Moscow Treaty calls for each country to reduce its arsenal by the end of 2012, there are no provisions on the verification of the destruction of excess warheads, which can be kept in operational reserve. In that regard, we feel that it is appropriate for the International Atomic Energy Agency to be involved in the monitoring and verification of the nuclear arsenals of the nuclear-weapon States, particularly those of the United States and Russia.

Following the failure to submit a report to the General Assembly in 2004, the Panel of Governmental Experts on the issue of missiles in all its aspects, established by resolution 59/67 of 2004, was able to agree on a substantive report to be submitted to the General Assembly at its current session. Despite the complexity of that issue, the Panel has finally managed to reach a conclusion that states, among other points, that the issue needs to be discussed further within the United Nations system.

The work towards the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones to strengthen the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime is continuing. As mandated by resolution 62/31 of 2007, the States parties to the Treaty of Bangkok have started direct consultations with the nuclear-weapon States with a view to ensuring their early ratification of the Protocol of the Treaty. The parties to other nuclear-weapon-free zones must also work towards the universalization of such zones.

While the focus on the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction and their proliferation is

unavoidable, we underscore that it should not dilute attention to the regulation and reduction of conventional weapons. The proliferation of those weapons, particularly small arms and light weapons, continues seriously to threaten peace and security in many regions of the world.

As a State party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer or Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, twice this year Indonesia has committed to implementing the provisions of the Convention by destroying some of the anti-personnel mines in its stockpile. Meanwhile, we support efforts for the promotion and universalization of the Convention in our region, and hope for their further strengthening with the involvement of civil society.

History was made at the Dublin Diplomatic Conference held in May 2008, when representatives of 111 participating States and civil society sat together to adopt the Convention on Cluster Munitions. That was a milestone of achievement for humanity and the disarmament agenda, and Indonesia was very pleased by it. The Convention will facilitate the international community's efforts in better addressing the disasters caused by the use of inhumane cluster munitions. Being part of a region that is most affected by the use of cluster munitions, Indonesia hopes that the countries of the South-East Asian region will consider joining the Convention.

Finally, as we said earlier, momentum is emerging towards achieving a world free of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, and at the same time to control inhumane conventional weapons. The international community rightly expects that the momentum will reach its peak later this year. Only then will we all feel more optimistic about securing a peaceful and stable future for our world, which the current and future generations truly deserve.

Mr. Jürg Streuli (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of our Committee and assure you of my delegation's full support. My delegation looks forward to constructive debates on all aspects of disarmament, non-proliferation and international security in the coming weeks.

Switzerland regrets that many of the multilateral disarmament forums remain blocked. In our view, that is not the result of inherent deficiencies of the system,

but rather reflects the international security context and the lack of political will to engage in negotiations. We need to overcome that obstacle if we are finally to make progress.

The Conference on Disarmament remains the most pertinent example of the current impasse. Another year has passed in which member States could not agree on a programme of work, nor as a result on negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). Such a treaty should be negotiated without any preconditions regarding scope and verification. Switzerland remains convinced that an FMCT will, alongside the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, become one of the pillars of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. The draft programme of work prepared by this year's six Presidents, as contained in document CD/1840, is a solid basis on which to pursue our efforts next year.

The second meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT gave rise to a constructive exchange of views on the objectives that we hope to achieve by the 2010 Review Conference. We need to maintain that spirit of dialogue and cooperation. The NPT is one of the cornerstones of the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime. It is crucial to persevere in efforts to universalize and strengthen it further.

A priority for my country is the decrease in the alert level of nuclear weapons systems. Maintaining nuclear weapons on high alert was a feature of the cold war. That time is over, and the reduction in operational preparedness would lead to increased security for all. We are convinced that we can reach that goal if we approach the issue in an inclusive and pragmatic manner.

The international community is currently facing a number of challenges regarding nuclear issues. The decision of the Nuclear Suppliers Group to no longer demand the implementation of full-scope safeguards as a condition for nuclear cooperation with India raises fundamental questions about the future of the nuclear non-proliferation system. Iran's lack of full cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency and the recent decision of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to resume its enrichment activities are also of serious concern. Switzerland is

firmly convinced that all such issues must be solved through dialogue and diplomacy.

Certain recent signs point to the existence of greater political will to achieve nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Switzerland welcomes the recent efforts of some nuclear-weapons States to increase transparency regarding their nuclear arsenals. We should not forget, however, that the disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regimes continue to lack legally binding verification, transparency and confidence-building measures. Strengthening the verification, transparency and confidence-building mechanisms for all types of weapons of mass destruction will undoubtedly be one of the international community's most important tasks in the coming years.

In the field of chemical weapons, we trust that all States possessing such weapons will continue to destroy their stockpiles within the deadlines set by the States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention. Switzerland welcomes the outcome of the Second Review Conference, but advocates that the negotiation process include all stakeholders.

In the area of conventional weapons, the international community has taken a number of remarkable steps forward. Above all, this year has seen the adoption of the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Dublin in May. Switzerland welcomes that historic development and considers the Convention to be solid and ambitious. In our view, it is a reasonable compromise between military and humanitarian considerations. The Swiss Government has decided to sign the Convention on 3 December in Oslo. However, it is aware that the problems posed by cluster munitions have not been resolved yet. For that reason, my country appeals to all States involved in the negotiations concerning the new protocol on cluster munitions within the framework of 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 to contribute to the best of their abilities to ensuring the success of the negotiations.

Switzerland will preside over the next meeting of the parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, and will focus on obligations regarding stockpile destruction and mine clearance. In addition, my country continues

to work towards the universalization of the Convention, as well as of Protocol V annexed to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

Switzerland also attaches great importance to further strengthening the protection of civilians against the humanitarian consequences of mines and explosive remnants of war. Mine clearance around the globe has to continue in all affected territories. Victim assistance should focus not only on the immediate consequences generated by landmines; we must also improve the quality of and access to care, ensure the socio-economic reintegration of victims of mines, and guarantee their fundamental rights. Lastly, Switzerland aims to integrate mine action into the larger framework of development cooperation. We believe that we will achieve lasting and comprehensive results only if we approach mine action from such a perspective.

Concerning the issue of small arms and light weapons, Switzerland welcomes the substantive document resulting from the Third Biennial Meeting. After the failure of the 2006 Review Conference, the Meeting relaunched the issue of small arms and light weapons and the implementation of the Programme of Action. The result will enable recommendations for the future to take concrete form, regional and bilateral meetings to be organized, and projects to be implemented.

Switzerland is also pursuing, in close collaboration with a number of other States, its commitment to achieving greater recognition of the adverse impact of armed violence on development. Within the framework of the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, Switzerland organized, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme, a review summit meeting in Geneva on 12 September 2008. Switzerland is especially pleased to report that the summit received the support of the 85 States present for a final declaration. It hopes to be able to count on the support of the 95 States signatories of the Geneva Declaration for the promotion of that initiative in the relevant forums within the United Nations.

Lastly, Switzerland welcomes the report submitted to the General Assembly by the Group of Governmental Experts to examine the feasibility, the scope and parameters of an arms trade treaty. As a member of the Group, we would have favoured more substantive recommendations. We remain strongly in

favour of a comprehensive and legally binding arms trade treaty. We also consider it indispensable for the success of such a treaty to involve all stakeholders in the process. Switzerland remains committed to that issue and welcomes further discussion within the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I believe that statement was timed with the precision of a Swiss watch.

Mr. Tarui (Japan): First, allow me to express my congratulations to you, Ambassador Suazo, on your assumption of the Chair of the First Committee. I am confident that, with the benefit of your wealth of diplomatic experience and skill, you will be able to steer us smoothly through this session's deliberations. I assure you of my delegation's full support as you carry out that vital task.

Nearly two decades after the end of the cold war, uncertainties in some areas unfortunately seem to be growing. In that light, we must realize that the field of disarmament and non-proliferation is no exception to that trend. For instance, the nuclear issues of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran remain unresolved, and all relevant Security Council resolutions on both issues should be implemented without delay. In addition, the lack of transparency in nuclear forces is also a source of anxiety in certain regions.

Against that backdrop, Japan reaffirms its firm determination to continue to play a leading role in promoting disarmament and non-proliferation. As a nation that has dedicated itself to peace, Japan exerts strenuous efforts to promote disarmament and non-proliferation. Japan is the only nation that has suffered from atomic bombings.

Accordingly, Japan has tasked itself with the mission and responsibility to strongly appeal to the world that the devastation caused by nuclear weapons never be revisited and to lead the international community in its endeavour to achieve our common objective of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Japan has taken a strong leadership role in disarmament and non-proliferation, particularly this year. Upon the initiative of Japan as President at this year's Hokkaido Toyako summit of the Group of Eight (G8), which includes four nuclear-weapon States among its members, the Leaders Declaration for the

first time in history contained a paragraph on nuclear disarmament. In July, the Prime Ministers of Japan and Australia agreed on the establishment of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, with the first meeting to be held from 19 to 21 October in Sydney.

At this sixty-third session of the First Committee, Japan will once again submit two important draft resolutions, one on nuclear disarmament and the other on small arms and light weapons. Every year, the nuclear disarmament draft resolution, which is one among several such draft resolutions, garners the highest number of supporting votes at the General Assembly, last year reaching 170, the highest ever. The draft resolution on small arms and light weapons, prepared in cooperation with Colombia and South Africa, lays a foundation on which Member States can exchange views and act to implement the United Nations Programme of Action. We strongly hope that United Nations Member States will once again express their continuous support for the draft resolutions.

Against the wishes of the people of the world, disarmament still continues to stagnate. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has not entered into force. The Conference on Disarmament has not undertaken negotiations on a disarmament treaty for essentially more than a decade. In particular, negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty have yet to start.

Despite the many challenges facing Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) regime and the failure of the 2005 NPT Review Conference, a convergence of views among the States parties remains distant. Nevertheless, we can see a light shining through the dark. It is encouraging that the fourth CTBT Ministerial Meeting held recently in New York ended successfully and enjoyed high-level attendance. The six presidents of the Conference on Disarmament have produced a draft programme of work, contained in document CD/1840, which commands near consensus, and the review process for the 2010 NPT Review Conference has successfully begun.

It is thus high time that political leaders of the international community strongly expressed their political commitment to disarmament. In particular, leaders should demonstrate their political will towards nuclear disarmament by setting the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. We should therefore prepare the

way for leaders to demonstrate that political will. Articles in the *Wall Street Journal* in January 2007 and 2008 have built international momentum in that direction.

This year, the First Committee can also play a crucial role towards that end. The Japanese and Australian initiative to launch the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament is also intended to pave the way for political commitments by leaders. The Commission, which is mainly comprised of former high-level political decision makers, plans to make practical and realistic recommendations for achieving nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, upon which political leaders can then draw.

That political will has to be shown by all members of the international community. In that context, I would like to recall that the Leaders Declaration of the G8 Hokkaido Toyako summit called upon all nuclear-weapon States to undertake the reduction of nuclear weapons in a transparent manner. It is also important that the negotiations on the legally binding successor framework to the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty achieve an outcome before the Treaty ceases to be in effect.

Non-nuclear-weapon States should also commit themselves to meeting their non-proliferation obligations and to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Furthermore, it is also important that India observe its commitments made in conjunction with the recent Nuclear Supplier Group decision. Japan's decision to join the consensus was difficult in many ways. In cooperation with other countries and with the benefit of our expertise and civil society enthusiasm, Japan will make its utmost efforts to forge the political will towards achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world.

I would now like to turn briefly to the issue of conventional weapons. In cooperation with Colombia and South Africa, Japan plans to submit a draft resolution advocating follow-up in the General Assembly on the accomplishments of the Second Biennial Meeting of States on small arms and light weapons and for the development of a mid- and long-term vision for the work related to the Programme of Action's implementation. Moreover, Japan has been actively participating in the international discussions to address the humanitarian concerns caused by cluster munitions. Japan welcomes the adoption of the

Convention on Cluster Munitions at the Dublin Diplomatic Conference and is currently considering concrete measures to enable us to sign the Convention. In parallel with that work, Japan continues to contribute to the negotiations to establish a legally binding instrument, within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, that engages the major cluster munitions producer and possessor countries.

On the issue of an arms trade treaty, the Group of Governmental Experts concluded that further consideration is required on the topic and efforts are already under way to work towards a global treaty. That momentum needs to be accelerated and further deliberations should be carried out with the widest possible participation of United Nations Member States, while the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Group of Governmental Experts Report should be encouraged.

In conclusion, allow me to say that we should all do our best to work together to demonstrate the political will necessary to further the cause of disarmament and non-proliferation. I would also like to stress the importance of the role played by civil society. I believe that under your effective leadership, Sir, the work of the First Committee will surely bear fruit.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): For the sake of brevity, I will read out a summarized version of my full statement, which is being circulated.

Mr. Chairman, I congratulate you on your election as the Chairman of the First Committee and wish you success in steering the work of the Committee.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The world is witnessing an erosion of arms control and disarmament measures, the reversal of the non-proliferation policies of key Powers, the violation of treaty obligations and the weakening of United Nations disarmament institutions. The lack of progress in the resolution of long-standing regional disputes and the emergence of new forms of conflicts continue to obstruct the objective of equal security for all.

In addition to the horizontal and vertical proliferation of weapons of mass destruction at the

State level, the threat of weapons of mass destruction being acquired and used by non-State actors is of growing concern. Discriminatory and short-sighted policies on access to nuclear technology for narrow gains, in disregard of any equitably applicable criteria, have further undermined the international non-proliferation regime and detract from its credibility and legitimacy. That is compounded by the clear possibility of such arrangements leading to the diversion of nuclear material for military purposes. Pakistan has consistently called attention to the need to evolve a new consensus on the entire range of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation issues. The architecture of such a global consensus should rest on a solid foundation comprising the following elements: a renewed commitment by all States to general and complete disarmament; the finalization of universal, non-discriminatory and legally binding negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States; an international agreement on universal and non-discriminatory criteria for cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy; addressing concerns arising from the development, deployment and proliferation of missiles and anti-ballistic missile systems, which are inherently destabilizing; strengthening the international legal regime in order to prevent the militarization of outer space; negotiations on the balanced reduction of armed forces and conventional armaments; the peaceful settlement of disputes; removing the underlying security concerns of States; preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; and instituting mechanisms to ensure the safety and security of strategic assets.

The decisive factor for reviving consensus on disarmament and non-proliferation is the political will of States, in particular the nuclear-weapon States and other militarily significant countries. They cannot obtain security for themselves at the cost of the insecurity of others. Pakistan will be ready to endorse any proposal for the Conference on Disarmament's programme of work that treats the four core issues on the Conference agenda — nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and a verifiable fissile material treaty — in a balanced manner.

There was universal consensus until recently that the Conference on Disarmament would work towards a verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT).

However, there are now attempts to set aside the principle of verification. For Pakistan, the incorporation of international and effective verification into an FMCT mandate is of critical importance. Moreover, in accordance with the Shannon mandate of 1995, the question of the existing and future stocks of fissile material also needs to be addressed.

We need to strengthen the existing mechanisms for preventing and combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and to identify means of fully implementing the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Any proposal with regard to the conventional arms trade has to take into account the right of all States to manufacture, import, export, transfer and retain conventional arms for self-defence and security. The preservation of a balance in the defence capabilities of States at the lowest level of armaments would contribute to peace and stability and should be the prime objective of conventional arms control.

Regarding the discussions of the Group of Governmental Experts on Cluster Munitions, we look forward to an outcome that will strike a balance between military considerations and humanitarian concerns.

Our long-standing pursuit of a nuclear-weapon-free South Asia was thwarted in 1998 by the nuclear tests in our neighbourhood. Pakistan was forced to respond in order to restore the strategic balance in the region. Yet, since 1998, as a responsible nuclear State, Pakistan has consistently pursued its commitment to restraint and responsibility. One such effort is our proposal for the establishment of a strategic restraint regime in South Asia that encompasses conflict resolution, nuclear and missile restraint and conventional balance.

Policies that create nuclear disparities in our region and reinforce the discriminatory approach towards Pakistan can only contribute to exacerbating strategic asymmetries that would destabilize the entire region and, indeed, the world. Such an arrangement, driven by profit motives rather than any real non-proliferation gains, would in fact encourage further proliferation. It would have been much more constructive to have promoted a level playing field for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy under appropriate

safeguards through an objective, non-discriminatory criteria-based approach.

Pakistan will continue to act responsibly in maintaining its minimum credible deterrence. However, we will be oblivious neither to our security requirements nor to the needs of our economic development. Pakistan has a significant civil nuclear programme designed to meet our growing energy needs, estimated to reach over 8,000 megawatts by 2030. We will continue to develop our capacity for nuclear power generation in accordance with the international safety regime.

We will also persist in our efforts to establish a truly equitable, balanced and effective non-proliferation regime that will meaningfully contribute to the overarching objective of nuclear disarmament and greater security for all in a stable international order.

Mr. Antonov (Russia Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to your honourable and responsible post and wish everyone success in our work at this session of the First Committee.

Questions of disarmament and non-proliferation cannot be considered in isolation from the current state of international security in general. The situation is cause for some concern. Contemporary security problems cannot be solved by direct forceful methods or by unilaterally established schemes that completely disregard international law and assert the principle of permissiveness.

We have repeatedly, including in this Room, urged all States to establish a genuinely equitable system of international security, of which disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control are integral parts. We can confront the growing range of challenges and threats only together.

That is why Russia continues to advocate the strengthening of the United Nations central role. Attempts to rely on the illusions of a unipolar world and to close our eyes to double standards in the sphere of international security can only further aggravate the problems in multilateral disarmament. We can hardly expect any serious progress in the field unless we change the overall political climate, turn away from confrontation and repudiate the bloc mentality.

Unfortunately, repeated attempts to resolve the most difficult security issues by rash, irresponsible and aggressive actions still occur. The recent act of aggression by Georgia against South Ossetia is an example of that. The results of the Georgian intervention have been numerous casualties among civilians and peacekeepers — in short, a grave humanitarian tragedy.

All of this clearly highlights the deficiencies of the European security architecture inherited from the past. History has taken another turn and reminded us of the Munich agreement and, above all, the conclusions all of us, or so it seemed, drew from it: that we should not indulge aggressors and sacrifice a collective security system to narrow nationalistic interests.

The Caucasian crisis and the reckless expansion of NATO attempt to maintain the cold war version; the establishment of new military bases, including anti-missile bases close to Russian borders; and the elaboration of a global rapid reaction force are nothing but aspirations to alter the parity of strategic forces in the world, secure military and political domination, and entrench the principles of a unipolar world, which, as experience has shown us, has no historical prospects.

On 5 June 2008, the Russian President Dmitry Medvedev put forward a positive alternative to the further escalation of tensions in the Euro-Atlantic region. The idea is to establish a new, progressive and open collective security system on the basis of equality and precise universally binding rules. The President of Russia clearly formulated a proposal to elaborate a treaty on Euro-Atlantic security. A few days ago in the General Assembly, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Sergey Lavrov, spoke in detail on specific parameters for this idea (see A/63/PV.14).

I would like to emphasize that the principles of a multipolar world laid down in the Russian proposal would, if carried out, in practice allow for the creation of equitable foundations for interaction among all States. This arrangement, in turn, would have a positive influence on peace and stability, and ensure the right of each State to develop independently, while reinforcing its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The proposed international security algorithm would permit no State to strengthen its security at the expense of the security of another.

Our positive programme of action once again confirms that Russia does not desire confrontation with

any State and is opposed to self-isolation. We will develop friendly relations with other States to the extent that our partners are ready to do so.

We are deeply convinced that, in order to realize the idea of an equitable system of international security, we must take consistent energetic measures in the fields of disarmament and non-proliferation. For our part, we are doing everything possible to make disarmament — first and foremost nuclear disarmament — progressive and irreversible.

We are convinced that the establishment of United States global missile defence bases in Poland and the Czech Republic will have a negative effect on the disarmament process. We propose an alternative: a collective response to missile challenges and threats that undermines no one's security interests. Today, we ask the question: Are our partners ready for a genuinely equitable dialogue aimed at strengthening international security? We await a reply. We are convinced that making the regime of the Treaty between the United States and Soviet Union on the Elimination of their Intermediate-range and Shorter-range Missiles global in character would contribute to global security and counter future missile threats.

The threat of weapons in outer space will undermine global stability. We have a simple question: Why should there be arms in outer space? Why waste billions for nothing if, in any case, an adequate and apparently asymmetrical response will be found? Surely it would be better to spend that money on solving the economic problems of developing countries or on the destruction of weapons of mass destruction, particularly chemical weapons.

In February 2008, Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs Lavrov, on behalf of Russia and China, submitted a relevant draft treaty at the Conference on Disarmament. We expect the Conference to revitalize its activities in this field.

The motivation to place weapons in outer space could be reduced by transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space. At this session of the General Assembly, Russia intends to submit its traditional draft resolution entitled "Transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities".

Another priority is the issue of international information security. We are again submitting a draft

resolution to that effect. We call upon all delegations to support it.

Only one and a half years are left before the next Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 2010. The Conference is an important milestone in our concerted work on strengthening the non-proliferation regime. Together we must produce a joint package of specific proposals through implementation of which we will multiply our efforts to further consolidate the whole basis of nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. For our part, we will continue to work constructively in support of a proposal that will unite the participants in non-proliferation and seek compromises acceptable to all.

Today, we are seeing a growing interest in the idea of monitoring the transfer of conventional weapons, including the entire complex of problems from production to stockpiling to use by importers. The crisis in the Caucasus has shown how damaging it is to the existing system of arms transfers, including the codices and understandings within the framework of the Wassenaar Arrangements. The time has come to carry out a serious analysis in this area to identify the basic problems and ways of resolving them. The decisions of the group of governmental experts that studied the feasibility of the idea of an international arms trade treaty this year could contribute substantially to that work. We call for just such diligent work before taking a decision on producing any new agreement in the field of transfer of conventional weapons.

These very key issues are addressed in greater detail in my written statement. My colleagues are invited to familiarize themselves with the in-depth views of the Russian Federation on non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control by consulting that statement.

In conclusion, I would like to state that it seems to us that we have important and difficult work ahead of us in formulating a disarmament and non-proliferation agenda for the international community in the near future. We are ready for constructive, mutually respectful and open dialogue with a view to achieving practical results. Permit me to assure you, Sir, of our support for your efforts to organize the work ahead of us in an effective manner.

Mr. Petev (Bulgaria): Allow me at the outset, Sir, on behalf of the Bulgarian delegation, to extend our warmest congratulations to you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. Bulgaria fully endorses the statement made yesterday by the representative of France on behalf of the European Union, laying out the views which Bulgaria also shares. I will not repeat them, but would like to highlight a few points.

Let me reiterate Bulgaria's full support for an effective multilateral mechanism in the sphere of disarmament and non-proliferation, with the United Nations playing a strong role. Disarmament, arms control and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as the strengthening of the international treaty system, should be a priority for all States, since the list of risks and challenges to our common security is regrettably a very long one. In this regard, the need for full and universal implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is and must remain a priority. Thus, the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is also indispensable.

Bulgaria attaches great importance to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW) and its Protocols. The Convention forms a key part of international humanitarian law, and my country is firmly committed to working to strengthen it. We take active part in the work of the group of governmental experts on the development of a legally binding instrument on cluster munitions, which cause unacceptable harm to civilians. It is our belief that consensus will be reached and that the group will be able to fulfil its mandate. Bulgaria regards the work of the group of governmental experts within the CCW framework and the newly adopted Convention as mutually reinforcing. We believe that the results of the work of the group will be compatible with the standards set by the new treaty.

We actively participated in the negotiations of the newly adopted Convention on Cluster Munitions which is to be opened for signature in Oslo in December this year. Because of our deep concern at the humanitarian consequences of the use of cluster munitions, which cause unacceptable harm to civilians, Bulgaria is of the opinion that the need for the quick entry into force of a legally binding document banning such weapons is

undisputable. Our policy on that issue is oriented towards attaining that highly humane objective.

With that in mind, the Bulgarian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, together with the Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, co-hosted a regional conference on the Convention on Cluster Munitions, adopted in Dublin in May this year. The conference was held on 18 and 19 September 2008 in Sofia. More than 80 representatives of countries of the Regional Cooperation Council and civil society took part.

The objective of the forum was to provide a venue for an in-depth discussion on the newly adopted Convention on Cluster Munitions. There were three sessions, each with a different focus. The first panel was on the Convention as a new legal norm, the second was on the humanitarian aspects of the new treaty and the third was on more technical issues, such as stockpile destruction. The speakers were Government representatives, civil society activists and professionals from international organizations working in the sphere of cluster munitions, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations Mine Action Service.

The full implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects remains among Bulgaria's priorities. We were particularly encouraged by the fact that the Third Biennial Meeting, held in July this year, produced a substantive report. The near-consensus by which it was adopted illustrates the relevance and significance of that instrument.

In a similar vein, Bulgaria is strongly committed to working for the adoption of a legally binding international arms trade treaty. The demand for such an instrument is strong both on the part of civil society and on the part of most States.

Mr. Onischenko (Ukraine): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your well-deserved election. We are confident that your leadership will steer our work to a successful conclusion. In that regard, you may be assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

The delegation of Ukraine fully associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of France on behalf of the European Union. At the same

time, I would like to take this opportunity to address some other issues that are of considerable importance to Ukraine.

Ukraine consistently supports a multilateral approach to the disarmament and international security agenda. While recognizing the difficulties in the implementation of existing international treaties and in bringing new ones into force, as well as the deadlock in the disarmament negotiations, we fully reaffirm our commitment to maintaining and strengthening the current disarmament machinery, mainly the First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission.

The international community continues to be challenged by the threats posed by the risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery. In today's changing global security environment, the strengthening of international and national legal norms and instruments to prevent WMD proliferation remains a top priority.

A broad and comprehensive concept is needed to effectively counter the risks that may arise from WMD proliferation. In that regard, the European Security Strategy, which embraces the universalization and reinforcement of multilateral agreements related to WMD, export controls regimes, the criminalization of prohibited activities and the enhancement of the relevant physical protection, provides a good basis for consolidating efforts and transforming our aspirations into concrete actions. We will also continue to support the work of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), which complements the global efforts against the proliferation of WMD and their means of delivery.

The Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention are two important components of the global system against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Non-accession to those conventions continues to pose a serious challenge to our global security. Once again, we reiterate our call for wider adherence to and the effective implementation of those conventions.

Ukraine regards the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. We are fully committed to the implementation of the NPT in all three of its mutually reinforcing pillars: non-proliferation, disarmament and the

peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We also continue to work towards universal accession to the NPT and call upon those States that are not yet parties to it to join the Treaty.

Ukraine recognizes the right of NPT parties to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination and in conformity with articles I and II of the NPT. However, maintaining the balance between the rights and obligations envisaged in the Treaty is essential. Ukraine recognizes the special role of the International Atomic Energy Agency and its safeguards system and supports the enhancement of its effectiveness.

We remain confident that all processes should promote overall improvement in the international situation in other spheres, the establishment and practical implementation of universal security guarantees, adherence by all States and international organizations to the norms and basic principles of international law, unconditional compliance with their obligations and the consolidation of an atmosphere of mutual trust.

Ukraine welcomes the positive outcome of the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, held under the skilful leadership of Ambassador Volodymyr Yelchenko, Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations in Vienna. We hope that the current NPT review cycle will produce tangible results that will make it possible to take appropriate measures to strengthen the regime's integrity and implementation.

This year, the delegation of Ukraine intends to propose for the consideration of delegations a draft resolution entitled "Towards the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons", the main purpose of which is to provide guidance and impetus for delegations in their deliberations at the third session of the Preparatory Committee concerning issues on which we believe States could produce agreed recommendations for the next Review Conference.

I would also like to reaffirm the vital importance of the universalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We are confident that the entry into force of the CTBT would tangibly help to attain the noble objective of a safe and peaceful world

free of nuclear weapons. Ukraine, whose role in nuclear disarmament can serve as an example, remains one of the strongest and consistent supporters of the existing international instruments in that field.

It is of the greatest importance that the integrity of the norms set by the CTBT be respected. Pending the Treaty's entry into force, the moratorium on nuclear tests and any other nuclear explosions should be maintained. We call upon all States to refrain from any action contrary to the Treaty and to further demonstrate their firm determination to observe the CTBT norms and keep to their commitments once the Treaty enters into force.

Ukraine greatly values regional approaches to nuclear disarmament. Confidence-building measures, including the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, can contribute significantly to disarmament. We welcome all 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.

We stress the need to continue to strengthen action in countering the uncontrolled proliferation of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, in particular by transport aviation operations. Ukraine is a devoted advocate of the efforts within the United Nations system and at the regional level to address the small arms and light weapons issue in all its aspects. Being a firm supporter of practical steps on a national level to ensure the effective implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action, as well as of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe document on small arms and light weapons, Ukraine attaches particular importance to the destruction of excessive stockpiles of this kind of weapons and related ammunition.

Another important instrument of both disarmament and international humanitarian law is the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Ukraine gives great importance to the proper implementation of the Convention, which includes mine clearance, victim assistance and stockpile destruction. It is evident that without deepening international cooperation, it would be very difficult to reach the Convention's paramount goal. Ukraine is ready to intensify efforts with its partners in order to ensure a timely and proper implementation of its obligations under the Convention.

As a State party to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW), including the amendment and all its five Protocols, Ukraine is fully committed to proper compliance with them. My country shares the need to strengthen the effectiveness of the CCW and its Protocols, which are currently in force, as important instruments for reducing the negative consequences of conventional warfare operations and their aftermath on combatants and civilians.

We believe that the CCW provides an effective basis for international action on major problems arising from the use of existing conventional weapons and those still to come. Regarding the possibility of broadening the scope of the CCW to include other kinds of conventional weapons, we would like to stress the importance of taking into account the positions of all parties to the Convention before a final decision is taken. At the same time, we are confident that the effectiveness of new binding measures can be fully achieved only through their universal application and through results-oriented international cooperation.

With regard to the issue of regulating global trade in conventional arms, Ukraine supports the initiative on the international arms trade treaty, which could become a comprehensive instrument for establishing common standards in this field, thus preventing conventional arms diversion. In this regard, I would like to mention that a Ukrainian governmental expert was a member of the United Nations group of governmental experts on drafting an arms trade treaty by establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms. We hope the outcomes reached by the group will become the first step in this process.

To conclude, I would like to stress the urgency of consolidating international efforts, in the United Nations and in other forums, towards progress in the areas of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control for the sake of our future generations.

Mr. Onemola (Nigeria): On behalf of the Nigerian delegation, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, and members of the Bureau on your election. I assure you of our support and cooperation. We are convinced that, under your able leadership, our deliberations will be guided to a successful conclusion. I also thank the

High Representative, Ambassador Sergio Duarte, for his introductory statement. Nigeria associates itself with the statements delivered on behalf of Non-Aligned Movement and the African Group.

The end of the cold war was expected to usher in a new era of global peace and security. Unfortunately, the hope generated by that important development has apparently turned out to be an illusion. This session of the First Committee is thus being held at a time when the international community holds increasingly divergent views on how best to address the issues of arms control and disarmament.

Also, the need to implement disarmament and non-proliferation measures has become a major challenge to the maintenance of international peace and security. It is common knowledge that the last decade witnessed the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the successful negotiation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), as well as the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Those achievements flowed from shared international concerns about the danger that weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons pose to mankind.

By contrast, the international community has made no appreciable progress on arms control and disarmament since the beginning of this decade, the most notable failures being the lack of any meaningful outcome document to the 2005 NPT Review Conference and the United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and the inability of Members to agree on a thematic cluster on disarmament and non-proliferation in the 2005 World Summit Outcome. This decade has also witnessed the perennial impasse in the Conference on Disarmament, the lingering ambivalence about the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty, the continuing failure to ratify the CTBT, and the inability of the Disarmament Commission to agree on guidelines in the pursuit of disarmament objectives.

The threat to international peace and security posed by the prevailing stalemate in multilateral disarmament negotiations is glaring. It is therefore hardly surprising that world military expenditures, which stood at \$780 billion at the beginning of this decade, have now risen to \$1.34 trillion. This, in essence, translates into \$202 for each person on Earth, in a world where some people live on less than one dollar a day. The need to reverse this negative trend should be seen as one of the greatest challenges to the international community today.

Threats emanating from the excessive accumulation of weapons, either chemical or those of mass destruction, are known to be among the factors that stimulate others to acquire those weapons. I will therefore not fail to underscore the importance of confidence-building measures in alleviating the fears of States that may feel threatened by the possession of weapons of mass destruction by others. Security guarantees cast firmly in legally binding documents remain, in our view, the best assurance that such States will not similarly acquire nuclear arms in presumption of self-defence. Such guarantees have a secondary utility in assuring non-nuclear-weapon States that their decisions to forgo the acquisition of the nuclear weapons under the NPT were not misplaced.

My delegation wishes to reaffirm Nigeria's belief in multilateralism as the core principle for addressing issues of disarmament and international security. We will continue to abide by our commitments under the various disarmament and arms control agreements to which we are party, and to work with other nations in promoting disarmament and non-proliferation in all their aspects. It is our hope that such cooperation will lead to the achievement of the overall objective of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. Nigeria also reaffirms that all States parties, nuclear and non-nuclear alike, share a common obligation to ensure adherence to non-proliferation in all its aspects. We maintain that the call for non-proliferation must be complemented by concrete action in the area of nuclear disarmament as the most effective way of ensuring that such weapons do not fall into the hands of non-State actors.

As a first step, efforts should be made to promote the ratification of the CTBT, in particular through adherence by the remaining Annex II States, whose ratification is mandatory for the Treaty to enter into force. Pending the Treaty's entry into force, nuclear-

weapon States should continue to maintain the existing moratorium on nuclear weapon test explosions or explosions of any other nuclear device. At the same time, the Nigerian delegation will continue to maintain its position on the need to guarantee the inalienable rights of all States to develop, research, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Nigeria also wishes to reiterate its support for the concept of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States in the various regions concerned.

As a demonstration of Nigeria's commitment to the denuclearization of Africa, we initiated a proposal at the 8th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union, held in Khartoum in 2006, which called on States that have not yet signed or ratified the Treaty of Pelindaba or its relevant protocols to do so, in order to enable the Treaty to enter into force without further delay. We urge the States concerned to implement or comply with the decision of the Executive Council, as applicable to them.

Nigeria reaffirms its commitment to the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We note with regret, however, that in spite of efforts at various levels, illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons has continued, and their devastating effects on African States, in particular, seem to mock the political will that we all exhibited at the time of adoption of the Programme of Action on Small Arms in 2001.

This proliferation of small arms is evident in the increased number and prolonged nature of armed conflicts, in the increasing number of victims, in the ruined economies and in the large-scale humanitarian crises. In this regard, one of the greatest challenges that we all face is how to accord priority to the issue of denying easy accessibility to these weapons to non-State actors.

Therefore, we cannot overemphasize the need for the elaboration of a legally binding international instrument that will not only establish common international standards for the global arms trade but also control the indiscriminate supply of small arms to non-State actors. This is the role that my delegation envisages for the international arms trade treaty. In concluding such an instrument, the Economic

Community of West African States Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, signed in Abuja in June 2006, could serve as a useful guide.

As a further demonstration of Nigeria's commitment to the fight against illicit small arms and light weapons, the Nigerian Government has acceded to the United Nations Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, which entered into force in July 2005. We urge Member States to follow up on the framework of the recently concluded Third Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms.

We remain convinced that the best and most effective strategy for achieving the goal of preventing, combating and eradicating this illicit and deadly trade is through the elaboration of a legally binding global instrument. Political will on the part of all to stem the uncontrolled proliferation of small arms is also crucial.

There is need, therefore, for urgent action to criminalize oil bunkering for the sale of the oil so acquired. The use of those proceeds to fuel new crisis situations in Africa through the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea, is common practice. The same creativity and political will that was demonstrated in confronting "blood diamonds" as a source of regional instability must be made available this time in dealing with the "blood oil" that now threatens the Gulf.

Finally, the Nigerian delegation will, this year again, sponsor a draft resolution entitled "United Nations disarmament fellowship, training and advisory services". This programme, which was initiated by Nigeria in 1978, has thus far trained over 700 fellows from 155 States.

We appreciate the support of Member States that have continued to provide resources and facilities to participants in the programme. We are equally grateful to the Secretary-General for the able manner in which he has implemented the programme over the years. We call on Member States to support the draft resolution on the programme when presented, as they had always done in the past.

Mr. Al-Jarman (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to commend you, Mr Chairman, on your election to lead this important

Committee. I am confident that your broad diplomatic experience will contribute positively to our debates concerning developments on the questions of disarmament and the strengthening of international peace and security.

My delegation also supports the statement made by Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

As a result of the emergence and escalation of many situations of tension and conflict, as well as the growing lack of collective security, the First Committee meets this year in an atmosphere of suspicion and uncertainty. This lack of security is aggravated by the threat of existing weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, as well as by the attempts of certain States that do not have such weapons to acquire them. Such States are attempting to acquire the aforementioned weapons within the conceptual framework of security and deterrence, ignoring various regional and international multilateral conventions and agreements that prohibit such weapons and that call for their elimination. The challenges to international peace and security are not limited to the race by States to acquire various kinds of weapons. There is also the issue of arms trafficking, as well as the danger of sensitive weapons that can fall into the hands of extremists and non-State actors.

We are concerned by the concurrent horizontal and vertical strategic arms proliferation, as well as by the increase in annual expenditure on these arms, at the expense of investment in global development. We wish to reiterate the importance of the multilateral implementation of the 13 steps agreed at the 2000 Review and Extension Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as the only effective way to achieve our common goals in the fields of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Therefore, we call for the launching of a serious process of international security cooperation based on respect for the principles of international law and the United Nations Charter.

This year we celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the opening of the NPT for signature and we look forward to the success of our preparatory work for the 2010 Review Conference. We wish to reinforce the NPT goals within an international process, based on the rule of law and multilateralism. There should be commitment to the following: first, urging the nuclear States to enter into serious negotiations, accompanied

by a strengthening of political will, so that military arsenals can be eliminated gradually, systematically and multilaterally within the framework of the disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation conventions and protocols and within a specific time frame. Secondly, to require those countries that do not possess such weapons but seek to acquire them to reconsider their position and policies in that respect. Thirdly, to reinforce the efforts aimed at reaching an unconditional and effective international instrument that would guarantee safeguards for States that do not possess nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction, and also to underscore the right of such States to access modern nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. Fourthly, to strengthen efforts for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) to enter into force soon, and to make progress in prohibiting the development and stockpiling of bacteriological and toxin weapons.

The United Arab Emirates, which since its formation has pursued peaceful relations based on cooperation with its neighbours and on the principle of the peaceful settlement of conflicts coupled with respect for international law, considers that disarmament, non-proliferation and a security balance are at the top of its foreign policy priorities.

Thus, as we are concerned over the recent crisis regarding the Iranian nuclear issue, we urge all parties, especially Iran, to make every effort and to be sufficiently flexible politically, in order for that sensitive dossier to be settled diplomatically and peacefully. That would eliminate all concerns and misgivings about the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme, in accordance with the resolutions of the Security Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and in order to avoid escalating the present situation in the Gulf region. In that connection, we call on the international community to bring pressure to bear on Israel to dismantle and eliminate all its non-peaceful nuclear activities and to accede unconditionally to the NPT, being the only State in the region that has not yet acceded to it, and to submit all its nuclear and civilian installations to the full scope of IAEA control in accordance with the relevant resolutions under international law in order to create a zone free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East.

My country wishes to implement the principle of using nuclear energy for peaceful purposes as one of the three pillars of the NPT — together with nuclear

disarmament and non-proliferation — in order to preserve the regional and international balance of security. It wishes to reiterate its firm commitment to the reinforcement of peace and non-proliferation through its accession to the instruments of the NPT and the CTBT and the prohibition of chemical weapons. We also wish that efforts and proposals regarding the peaceful use of nuclear technology be pursued under IAEA controls and safeguards.

We would like the countries that are advanced in that field to respond without discrimination to the needs of developing countries with regard to nuclear energy, especially by providing financial and technical support and granting such countries access to nuclear material and equipment as well as scientific and technological information for the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Our peaceful nuclear programme represents a practical and responsible model of transparency in providing energy needs through our commitment not to enrich and not to reprocess, thanks to the help of some friendly countries and institutions and under the control of the IAEA.

In conclusion, we look forward to stronger international efforts aimed at spreading preventive diplomacy and a culture of peace and dialogue and at rejecting conflict. Such efforts should seek to enhance the principle of respect for the sovereignty of States and non-interference in their internal affairs and rejection of foreign occupation, in addition to the peaceful settlement of disputes. We hope that our debates here will achieve progress in all aspects of disarmament, so as to create a global environment free from all threats, where all human, economic and environmental efforts serve the economic and social development plans throughout the world.

Mr. Grinius (Canada): In the interests of time, we will be circulating our national statement. I will simply refer to some of its highlights.

(spoke in French)

At the outset, I, too, wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your election and to thank the other elected members of the Bureau. My delegation sincerely hopes that, under your leadership, the Committee will have a fruitful session.

As we are gathered here to debate issues related to international security and disarmament, we should first recognize our recent accomplishments. In less

than two months' time, our countries will meet in Oslo to sign a new Convention on Cluster Munitions. Canada welcomes that and congratulates all countries, international organizations and civil society groups that made it possible.

Nearly 11 years ago, the Ottawa Convention on Landmines was submitted to us for signature. Since then, much progress has been made towards our common goal of a mine-free world. However, the Convention faces a number of difficulties this year, as several countries have been unable to fulfil their obligations under articles IV and V. That is particularly disturbing because, at the Ninth Conference of States Parties, to be held next month, mine-clearance extension requests will have to be considered for the first time. As States parties, we must continue to work together for full and effective implementation not only of the Ottawa Convention, but of all our respective treaty obligations.

(spoke in English)

It is worth noting that the Ottawa and Oslo processes resulted from an alternative approach to the traditional disarmament negotiation machinery. Some suggest that that should serve as a wake-up call to the existing machinery, which is viewed as increasingly dysfunctional. It is not so much that any of us has been asleep; the multilateral machinery works when States want it to work.

One key opportunity to make progress is the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). A year and a half from now, many in this room will have an opportunity to agree to measures to advance the three pillars of the Treaty. Towards that goal, Canada aims to be a bridge-builder between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States. In particular, the security situation in the Middle East and in South Asia will be factors in the success of the NPT Review Conference. To that end, Canada will engage regional stakeholders and major Powers alike.

It should be recalled that some of our multilateral disarmament machinery is working rather well. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons is an excellent example. The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention's current review cycle has led to intersessional meetings that have generated valuable high-level debate for States parties. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization

continues provisionally to implement the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which remains just nine ratifications short of entry into force. Finally, through the Global Partnership programme, great strides have been made in preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction.

The Biennial Meeting of States on small arms and light weapons, which this past summer considered the implementation of the Programme of Action, was a significant opportunity to reinvigorate the process. Exceptionally, approval of the rather forward-looking outcome document was put to a vote when a consensus did not prove possible. That is a precedent that the United Nations might wish to invoke more generally in order to advance near-universally agreed objectives.

Disappointingly, countries of proliferation continue to stand in the way of real progress in international nuclear arms control and disarmament efforts. Canada is deeply concerned about North Korea's announcement in August this year to halt the dismantlement of its Yongbyon nuclear reprocessing facility and about its recent request that the International Atomic Energy Agency remove seals and surveillance at the facility. Canada supports a peaceful solution to the North Korean nuclear issue and urges the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to resume and complete its disablement work in keeping with its Six-Party commitments.

Iran is another country of proliferation concern that poses an important challenge to international nuclear arms control and disarmament efforts. Canada remains deeply concerned about the nature and scope of Iran's nuclear programme, as well as about Iran's continuing failure to comply with its international obligations, as required by Security Council resolutions 1696 (2006), 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007) and 1803 (2008).

Also on a disappointing note, the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva has been without an agreed programme of work since 1998. We must look for creative ways to jump-start that negotiating body lest it fall victim to paralysis and neglect. Forward movement on a fissile material cut-off treaty appears to have been blocked indefinitely by a small handful of countries that wish to retain the capacity to produce fissile material in the future.

In closing, I would encourage representatives to think about which of the nearly 60 draft resolutions on our agenda would best contribute to the attainment of

our common objectives. Several new draft resolutions challenge us to reflect on and respond meaningfully to significant disarmament and non-proliferation issues. The majority, however, are annual and biennial resolutions, many of which have now, frankly, made their point. Indeed, I saw many of those same resolutions here in the First Committee when I was a junior officer some 20 years ago. Perhaps those ancient resolutions are reminders of unfulfilled arms-control and disarmament expectations and worries. Perhaps some have simply sunk to irrelevant repetition.

We have to decide. In the spirit of reform, Canada calls on States to consider whether these older resolutions could now be retired or incorporated with others, as that would open up space for new deliberation and debate. We must resist conducting business as usual year after year if we are to advance towards the goal of a world at peace and without weapons of mass destruction. Otherwise, we risk condemning ourselves to irrelevance.

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the Permanent Observer of the Holy See.

Archbishop Migliore (Holy See): Sir, my delegation wishes to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of this Committee and assure you and the entire Bureau of its cooperation.

Two months from now, we will be celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This event invites us to a renewed commitment to disarmament, development and peace. All States are called upon to promote disarmament and non-proliferation as key elements of an international order in which the fundamental rights and freedoms of every person can be fully realized.

Peace and security are threatened by terrorism and, even more, by widespread violence, neglect of human rights and underdevelopment. As the human person is the ultimate aim of all public policies, arms regulation, disarmament and non-proliferation must have an interdisciplinary or, more importantly, a human approach. Without consideration of the social, economic, psychological and ethical impact of armaments, policies on disarmament and non-proliferation become a game of armed truce between States.

Indeed, we see a conflict emerging between security and military policies. The international

community strives to fight nuclear terrorism with the adoption of stringent norms banning the production, possession and transfer of such arms. On the other hand, however, not a few States pursue the renewal or the acquisition of nuclear arsenals at the national level. Consequently, a kind of conflict between security policies and development appears to emerge as well. States, and especially the major Powers, aspire in the nuclear sector to maximum national freedom and, at the same time, to incisive forms of international and regional monitoring.

This approach explains also in large part the scarce interest in fully complying with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and reaching the necessary quorum for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which contradicts the spirit of the United Nations and is not the way to build a durable and lasting peace. Arms regulation, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are key elements of a global strategy in favour of human rights, development and international order.

Despite the negative trend against multilateralism, this past spring in Dublin a group of 107 States, with the support of 20 observer States, international organizations and a coalition of non-governmental organizations, adopted the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which will be opened for signing on 3 December 2008 in Oslo. As a member of the core group of the Oslo process, the Holy See is particularly pleased with this achievement. The new Convention, besides filling a serious gap in humanitarian law, provides a strong and realistic solution to an ongoing problem, characterized not only by the indiscriminate use of cluster munitions, but also by the fact that they can rest undetonated on the ground for many years and, once disturbed, can devastatingly affect the daily lives of thousands of civilians around the globe.

The Oslo process not only represents an important political and legal step forward, but is also a warning signal. As a matter of fact, like the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, the Convention on Cluster Munitions has been negotiated and adopted outside the Conference on Disarmament. As emphasized by the General Assembly at its sixty-second session, multilateralism is the core principle in resolving disarmament and non-proliferation concerns. The Holy See shares this view and supports the plan for a fourth special session

of the General Assembly on disarmament, which could foster multilateralism within international organizations and in particular the Conference on Disarmament.

On the other hand, the Holy See is concerned about the erosion of multilateralism in the areas of arms regulation, disarmament and non-proliferation. The Conference on Disarmament has not had a programme of work for more than 10 years, and the lack of political will in the international community regarding these projects is disconcerting. It is well known that more progress can be made with an approach based on responsible, honest and coherent dialogue and the cooperation of all the members of the international community than with individualized and contrasting approaches.

The adoption of the arms trade treaty is uncertain. Greater transparency, given the enhanced complexity of the arms trade, linked also to an increase in the exchange of so-called dual-use goods and technologies, would contribute to actual security and provide the premises for a future limitation of the arms trade. In this perspective, it seems opportune to recall General Assembly resolutions 62/13, on objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures, and 62/26 on national legislation on transfer of arms, military equipment and dual-use goods and technologies.

Finally, disarmament is becoming an increasingly complex issue, which brings us back to more general problems, such as the reform of this Organization, the procedural and structural reform of the Conference on Disarmament, the tendency for civil and military economies to overlap, and the scarce coherence of the policies adopted in strategic sectors.

In this context, the Holy See calls upon the international community to show greater sensitivity and to make greater efforts in promoting the peaceful coexistence and survival of the entire human family, and believes that the best formula for success is cooperation and partnership among States, the United Nations, international organizations and civil society.

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker on our list for this morning.

Several delegations have asked to speak in exercise of the right to reply. May I remind them that

they are allowed 10 minutes for their initial remarks and 5 minutes for a second statement.

I now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Robotjazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to address the inaccurate and misleading remarks made yesterday by the representative of France on behalf of the European Union regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran's peaceful nuclear programme. First, in his statement, the French representative presumed that the resolutions of the Security Council regarding Iran's nuclear programme are tantamount to being messages sent by the entire international community.

That assertion is not true. The Security Council is not representative of the international community; that is why many Members of the United Nations have called for substantive reform of its composition. As a good example of the real message of the majority of the international community, I draw the attention of the French representative and his colleagues in the European Union to the self-explanatory statement issued by the 118 States members of the Non-Aligned Movement two months ago, in which they supported Iran's right under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to a nuclear programme, including Iran's policies, rights and decisions in the field of the nuclear fuel cycle.

Secondly, the demand for the suspension of enrichment is illegal, ultra vires and in contravention of the provisions of the NPT. Thus, our clear response to that demand is that Iran will never abandon its legal right to peaceful enrichment activity under the NPT.

Thirdly, as a result of Iran's proactive cooperation, the workplan agreed between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the summer of 2007 has been fully implemented and all outstanding issues surrounding past and present activities have been resolved and closed. What the European Union presidency has misleadingly characterized as outstanding issues are nothing but unsubstantiated allegations and documents fabricated by the United States. They have nothing to do with verification issues emanating from the implementation of safeguard agreements involving nuclear activities. While Iran has been denied access to the original documents relating to those allegations or even copies thereof, as a gesture of good faith we have

already provided the IAEA with our assessment of the alleged studies.

Fourthly, in his statement, the European Union representative would have us believe that Iran has failed “to reply to [the Agency’s] questions about possible activities in relation to the design and manufacture of nuclear weapons” (A/C.1/63/PV.2). That is not true. The Director General of the IAEA has acknowledged in his latest report that “the Agency ... has no information ... on the actual design or manufacture by Iran of nuclear material components of a nuclear weapon” (GOV/2008/38, para. 21). Misrepresentation and misquotation of IAEA reports by the European Union presidency is irresponsible and disgraceful behaviour. Alarmist and fear-mongering policies towards Iran’s peaceful nuclear programme will not work.

Fifthly, given the dogmatic insistence of France, Britain and the United States on the suspension of enrichment as a precondition for negotiations, the French representative’s claim that the European Union is committed to negotiations rings hollow. The European Union policy of insisting on suspension bears no relation to reality and is an irrational and failed policy.

Sixthly, Iran’s nuclear programme has been, is and will remain totally peaceful. IAEA reports since November 2003 bear witness to the peaceful nature of Iran’s nuclear activity. In this context, the Agency has been able to verify the non-diversion of declared nuclear material in Iran.

In closing, I would like to reiterate that our commitment to the NPT is steadfast.

Mr. Tsiskarashvili (Georgia): In exercising the right to reply, I would like to make several comments on the statement made by the Russian representative. At the very beginning, I would like to point out that the Russian Federation, by invading my country, finally came out of the shadows surrounding the long war that has been carried out against Georgia since our independence.

We are witnessing the results of the Russian Federation’s policy of territorial expansion. That expansion is being carried out at the expense of another State’s territorial integrity in complete disregard of international law, the Charter of the United Nations, Security Council resolutions and the lives and

aspirations of hundreds of thousands of Georgia’s citizens. Russia is moving forward, altering the post-1991 borders, with unpredictable implications for the wider region. Russian troops have invaded an independent country and have settled themselves on our territory. Towns and villages have been bombed. Peaceful citizens have been robbed, tortured and killed. And the victims are numerous; thousands of people have been left homeless. Under the aegis of a so-called unilateral peace enforcement operation, Russian troops are annexing an independent country.

Consequently, in August the Georgian Government duly informed the Security Council that the military action taken by the Georgian Government was in self-defence, in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. Russia has claimed that its military operations were intended to protect its peacekeepers and the civilian population in South Ossetia. Yet its further military actions and the recognition of sovereignty that followed the annexation of part of my country have continued to demonstrate that these claims are groundless. Claims of a humanitarian purpose are clearly not credible.

In reality, more than 150,000 citizens of Georgia have been displaced. I must quote a report issued by Human Rights Watch:

“The remaining residents of these destroyed ethnic Georgian villages are facing desperate conditions with no means of survival, no help, no protection, and nowhere to go.”

The Moscow-backed self-proclaimed president of the separatist enclave has declared that the de facto regime will not allow the Georgian population to return to their homes. I want to reiterate here that brutal acts of ethnic cleansing have been carried out on the occupied territory of my country.

As we talk about human losses here in this body, I want again to quote Human Rights Watch, which stated that “Russian aircraft dropped cluster bombs in populated areas in Georgia, killing at least 11 civilians and injuring dozens”, including a Dutch journalist.

It is very cynical for the representative of a country whose forces brutally invaded and continue to occupy my country to invoke the Munich Agreement.

Mr. Antonov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I did not want to respond. I spoke about the crisis in the southern Caucasus today in the context of

international security problems. The crisis in the Caucasus has demonstrated the failure of the current system of international security, and in my statement I called upon all countries to give thought to what happened and to discuss the gaps that were revealed by that crisis.

But we are tired of the lies circulating about the terrible events in Tskhinvali. Let us look at the documents published by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Let us take a look at the actual facts when the Caucasus crisis arose. Why are we talking about that today? Today we are here in the First Committee. What are we doing here? We are discussing problems of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. Why are we doing that? Our major task is to save people's lives. How are we to react to the idea that Georgian peacekeepers killed wounded Russian peacekeepers?

This information is not from Russia; it is from a CNN television news report. We have also read it, as have many representatives of Western States. Then something happened and all that information disappeared from those tapes. How is it possible to kill and to use tanks and armoured equipment against peacekeepers who only have automatic rifles? How was it possible to plunge the sleeping city of Tskhinvali into the nightmare aggression of a nocturnal military strike? How is it possible to point to the burning of that city and say that it was done by Russian troops? That is a lie.

I do not want to discuss these questions here. I am simply saying that the events in the Caucasus have shown yet again that we must not appease aggressors. We must be reminded to create effective systems of international security, part of which must be our efforts in disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. That is precisely why we are sitting here. We call for more constructive conversation precisely on this particular subject.

Mr. Tsiskarashvili (Georgia): I will directly and briefly sum up by asserting that the false information provided by the Russian representative is absolutely groundless.

Everyone here remembers that when the conflict started, when the Russians invaded Georgia, they first claimed that 2,000 people had been killed as a result of ethnic cleansing by Georgia. Subsequently, Human Rights Watch, the only international organization that was able to really penetrate into the blocked areas

occupied by the Russian Federation, stated that these figures were widely inflated.

Regarding the issue of the initiation of this conflict, the Georgian Government made it clear from the very beginning that it was in favour of a truly impartial international investigation. So far, no response has come from the Russian Government. The international community must ensure that such an investigation takes place in the very near future to uncover the reality of the initiation of the conflict.

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): Before closing, I would like to read out an excerpt of a statement made by someone I respect and admire greatly, the observer of the Holy See, who earlier today said that

(*spoke in English*)

“the Holy See calls upon the international community to show greater sensitivity and to make greater efforts in promoting the peaceful coexistence and survival of the entire human family”.

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the Secretary of the Committee.

Mr. Sareva (Secretary of the Committee): I would like to refer to a small booklet that was also distributed yesterday to your desks. It is entitled: “Taking the Floor — speaking in multilingual conferences”. The booklet, which I am showing here, was produced by the United Nations Interpretation Service. It provides useful tips for representatives on how to ensure that their words are interpreted correctly, as well as hints regarding pitfalls that they are kindly asked to avoid.

I would also like to mention two important things. First, we are, of course, working under time constraints, and there is a time limit. However, it would be extremely useful if representatives made every effort not to speak too fast, because that affects the quality of the interpretation provided. The second issue concerns the use of cellular phones, Blackberries and pagers. Please try to make sure that they are kept as far away from the microphones as possible, because they affect the quality of the sound and could prevent the interpreters from being able to follow the statements being delivered.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.