

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND AND FIFTY-FIFTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 27 February 2007, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Juan Antonio MARCH (Spain)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1055th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

At the very outset, I would like to inform the Conference that last week the European Foundation for Culture, Pro Europa, awarded the European Prize for Human Rights 2006 to our friend Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch of Austria, in recognition of his outstanding achievements as the International High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1999 to 2002, and his commitment to the total banning of landmines, particularly during his presidency of the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-free World. On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament I sincerely congratulate Ambassador Petritsch for receiving this award and I wish him much success in his efforts for disarmament.

(spoke in Spanish)

Before beginning the meeting, I also wish to inform the Conference that several ministers, Vice-Presidents and a number of Ministers for Foreign Affairs have expressed a wish to participate in the Conference during the week of 12 March. I am pointing this out because, on the one hand, those who may be thinking of bringing a senior figure to the Conference could perhaps let us know as soon as possible in order to make the best use of the time, and secondly, for everyone's timetable, be aware that there will perhaps be many plenaries during the week of 12 March and that, in view of the stature of the figures who will be participating, it would be very good to have as many of you all present as possible.

I wish to inform you that I have the following speakers for this morning's meeting: the Ambassador of Australia, Ambassador Caroline Millar, who will speak on the Mine Ban Convention; the Ambassador of Germany, Ambassador Bernhard Brasack, who will be speaking on behalf of the European Union, concerning transparency in armaments; the Ambassador of Turkey, Ahmet Üzümcü, who will be making a general statement; the Ambassador of Japan, Sumio Tarui, who will be speaking on transparency in armaments; the representative of Argentina, on behalf of Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru, Mr. Marcelo Valle Fonrouge, who will be speaking about transparency in armaments; the representative of Canada, Eric Walsh, who will be speaking on the Mine Ban Convention; and Indonesia, Ambassador Wibisono, on the same topic.

Before giving the floor to the speakers, I wish to draw the attention of the Conference to the request from Jordan to participate in the work of the Conference during this session, a request contained in document CD/WP.544/Add.4, which you have to hand. The group coordinators and China were notified of that request at the Presidential consultations yesterday. In accordance with established practice, I invite you to take a decision concerning this request without having examined it previously at an informal meeting. Should I take it that the Conference decides that Jordan should participate in our proceedings in accordance with the rules of procedure? As there are no objections, it is so decided.

I call upon the distinguished representative of Jordan to take the seat reserved for him in the room. We shall now begin the general debate.

(The President)

(spoke in English)

I give the floor to the representative of Australia, Ambassador Caroline Millar, on the subject of the Mine Ban Convention.

Ms. MILLAR (Australia): Mr. President, before I begin I add my congratulations to yours to Ambassador Petritsch for his important award.

It is my pleasure, as the President of the Seventh Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention, to mark the eighth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention. 2007 is an important year as it also marks the tenth anniversary of the start of negotiations, which began in Vienna and concluded in Ottawa with the signing of the Convention in December 1997. The result was a treaty that sought to end, for all time, the suffering caused by anti-personnel landmines.

The Mine Ban Convention marked a fundamental shift in the international community's approach to arms control. Governments worked side by side with civil society, outside traditional forums, and agreed a ban on an entire class of weapons, anti-personnel landmines. They also resolved to address the needs of landmine victims - a first in any arms control treaty.

A decade on, it has lost none of its appeal. With Indonesia's recent accession to the treaty, there are now 153 States committed to it. And we have achieved a huge amount. Altogether, States parties have destroyed about 38 million stockpiled landmines. Significant tracts of land have been cleared for communities. And we have made headway on meeting the physical and rehabilitation needs as well as social and economic needs of survivors.

This progress has been made possible through high levels of mine action funding: US\$ 376 million in 2005, the second highest level of funding ever. But the Convention has also done more to promote wider, global norms. The use of such weapons is now abhorrent to the international community, with only a handful of States choosing to use them. The Convention has stigmatized the production of anti-personnel mines. International trade is now negligible.

That said, great challenges still remain. A decade of progress, however, cannot mask the reality that we still have a considerable distance to travel to reach our goals. Anti-personnel mines remain a menace, taking the lives and livelihoods of innocent civilians around the world.

Clearing and returning mined areas to communities is fundamental to their socio-economic welfare and vital to the credibility of this Convention. The challenge for many mine-affected States is to complete this work within the Convention's 10-year time frame, and deadlines begin to fall for many in 2009.

Our efforts to achieve universal adherence to the Convention are also taking time, with too many States, some of which produce landmines, choosing to remain outside the Convention. Their in-principle and, in some cases, financial support for the humanitarian objectives of the Convention is welcome, but cannot substitute for full accession.

(Ms. Millar, Australia)

Australia, long committed to the aims of the Convention, took on the presidency conscious of these challenges and their implications. With mine clearance deadlines looming, we made this issue the major theme of the Seventh Meeting of States Parties. At that meeting, States parties reaffirmed their commitment to fulfilling the obligation to destroy all known mines and agreed a common declaration of completion. We also developed a mechanism to assist States that may need to apply for mine clearance extensions that will help them meet their obligations under the Convention. We have also worked hard in our presidency year to promote universal adherence to the Convention through a Universalization Action Plan.

Under this plan, Australia's then Special Representative on Mine Action visited Poland, one of two signatory States still to accede to the Convention. And we have plans to visit the other signatory State, the Marshall Islands, very shortly. Australia will co-chair a workshop for small Pacific island States in Vanuatu in May this year.

As a mine action donor, Australia has accelerated its assistance to mine-affected States. In 2005, Australia announced a new multi-year pledge of \$75 million over five years. This came on top of the more than \$100 million Australia delivered in mine action in the preceding decade. And while the focus of our effort is on mine-affected States in our region, Australia has contributed to efforts elsewhere, including recently \$1.5 million to the United Nations Mine Action Service operations in Lebanon. In this way, Australia aims to help free these States of the scourge of anti-personnel landmines and explosive remnants of war.

In November this year we will be handing over the presidency to Jordan, and we look forward very much to working with Jordan to continue this important work.

In some areas we are making rapid advances; in others, the impact is more modest. But we are making progress. These outcomes are a step in the long journey towards a world free of the suffering caused by anti-personnel landmines.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Millar for her very substantial statement, and I will now give the floor to Ambassador Bernhard Brasack of Germany on behalf of the European Union on the subject of transparency in armaments.

Mr. BRASACK (Germany): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

At the outset, Mr. President, allow me to congratulate Ambassador John Duncan of the United Kingdom on the assumption of his post as coordinator for item 7 of our agenda. The EU would like to assure you, as well as all coordinators, of our full support in your efforts to guide and lead our work.

We have dealt with the issue of openness and transparency in nuclear matters under agenda item 1. Therefore, the focus of this statement on behalf of the EU is on transparency in other areas of disarmament. Universal adherence to all existing treaties on weapons of mass destruction and the full implementation of their provisions, including the relevant transparency measures, in particular, for example, the annual exchange of information according to the decisions of the BWTC review conferences, remain essential.

(Mr. Brasack, Germany)

On a more general note, the EU maintains moreover that increased openness and transparency in the field of armaments serve to enhance confidence, ease tensions, strengthen regional and international peace and security and contribute to enhance responsibility in arms transfers. Measures of transparency should be designed to reduce and hopefully prevent the aggravation of conflict situations. Transparency measures should be as practicable and as down to earth as possible. Still, transparency is not an end in itself and should respect the principle of undiminished security of all States.

Universality of participation is essential: it is important that all States in all regions feel that their participation in transparency measures serves their security interests.

Transparency in armaments can play a vital role, in particular, when it comes to regional arrangements. Respective measures should be formulated and adopted by the States in the relevant regions in accordance with the particular regional conditions. As an example of regionally developed measures, the record of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe speaks for itself. The Stockholm CSBM document of 1986 has been gradually expanded over the years. The present Vienna Document of 1999 contains a wide range of transparency and confidence-building measures. Likewise, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, the CFE Treaty, has increased openness tremendously, as will the entry into force of the adapted CFE Treaty of 1999. The Open Skies Treaty further contributes to the effective regional “network of arms control and disarmament measures”, efforts which create more transparency and confidence-building.

The establishment of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms constituted at the global level a significant and lasting step forward in the promotion of transparency in military matters. In its 15 years of existence the United Nations Register has proven to be an effective international transparency and confidence-building mechanism, which is under continuing review and development.

Another important measure in this area is the mechanism on “Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures”. The last relevant resolution, 60/44, was again adopted by consensus in the sixtieth United Nations General Assembly in 2005. Outreach activities to achieve progress towards universal participation and other work with the support of the DDA continued on this issue, including a United Nations standardized instrument which contains general and specific instructions for reporting military expenditure in the form agreed by the Member States of the United Nations.

Transparency in the area of conventional arms, and in particular SALW, is an essential component in fighting the uncontrolled proliferation of these weapons and in providing an atmosphere of confidence and security. To this end, the EU welcomes the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts that has carried out the fifth review of the “continuing operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its further development”. The achievements of the Group pave the way for development and progress with respect to the overall aim of the United Nations Register, that is, effective transparency in armaments. The recommendations of the Group have been incorporated in the transparency-in-armaments

(Mr. Brasack, Germany)

resolution, 61/77, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly last December. It is the responsibility of us all to implement this progress and continue work on the further development of the United Nations Register. United Nations Member States that have not yet contributed to the United Nations Register are called upon to do so. In particular, the EU stresses the practical importance of including information on small arms and light weapons in Member States' annual reports to the Register, using the newly adopted standardized form for SALW notifications.

The use of man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS) by terrorists and other non-State actors as a tool for threatening civil aviation, and also aviation involved in peacekeeping operations, warrants worldwide attention and sustained and comprehensive action. MANPADS are extremely lethal, easily concealable and inexpensive. In this respect, the EU firmly supports broader efforts, in various multilateral forums, focusing in particular on export controls, including the OSCE, the G-8 initiative on MANPAD threat reduction and the Wassenaar Arrangement.

EU member States have been working with other States in the field of MANPADS destruction and stockpile and security management, and will continue to work proactively to help those States not in a position to do so to secure their stockpiles and to destroy surpluses of these weapons. The EU encourages other States, where they are able, to participate actively in stockpile and security management and destruction activities, to help guard against further illicit use.

The EU fully supports intensifying efforts to prevent the illicit transfer and unauthorized access to and use of MANPADS, including the strict implementation of the United Nations General Assembly resolutions adopted by consensus. Growing international concern about the proliferation of MANPADS needs to be translated into practical support to international, regional and national efforts to combat and prevent the illicit transfer of MANPADS and unauthorized access to and use of such weapons.

The old East-West confrontation has withered away and the threat of global nuclear war has receded. At present, the world situation is in a state of flux with many uncertainties which make it difficult for States to assess and provide for their legitimate security needs. A major stabilizing factor in this uncertain world is transparency in matters related to military security. Transparency is a key concept for executing the arms control and disarmament agenda - it can be described as the new code word for enhanced confidence and security for all. The EU is ready to listen to any further proposals under this agenda item with open ears and an open mind.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Ambassador Brasack, for your statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Turkey, Mr. Ahmet Üzümcü.

Mr. ÜZÜMCÜ (Turkey): Mr. President, my delegation requested the floor today to register its views on several issues that have been discussed during the informal plenary meetings since our last formal session. We also wish to highlight our views on issues that fall under this week's informal discussions.

(Mr. Üzümcü, Turkey)

Before I do that, let me thank you for the exceptional concert on the occasion of the Spanish presidency.

During the informal discussions under agenda item 6, coordinated by Ambassador Wibisono of Indonesia, we expressed our support for the Mine Ban Convention, which marks its tenth anniversary this year.

This Convention constitutes a true landmark. It is the product of strong dedication and hard work by like-minded countries, who, with the support of non-governmental organizations, hammered out in 1997 a treaty text aiming to rid the world of the scourge of landmines. The multifaceted challenges faced in the Ottawa process until then are still fresh in our minds. Nevertheless, today, we are heartened by the achievements realized thus far. Certainly, more needs to be done in many areas covered by the Convention. However, the determination demonstrated by States parties to fulfil their obligations and commitments is encouraging. Turkey, for its part, will spare no effort to fulfil its obligations and commitments.

For the Convention to reach its target of a mine-free world, though, universalization is of great importance. As the former Secretary-General of the United Nations pointed out in his message to the Seventh Meeting of States Parties, the universalization of the Convention will serve to reduce human suffering and will add new impetus to its implementation.

We are pleased to witness that the positive, progressively evolving trend of universalization is continuing, as Indonesia has recently become the 153rd State to formally accept to be bound by the Convention. We warmly congratulate Indonesia and take this opportunity to appeal to States which are not yet party to the Convention to join our family of nations.

Agenda item 7, coordinated by Ambassador Duncan of the United Kingdom, gives us a chance to examine several issues to which we attach importance.

In our general statement to the CD on 30 January, we stressed that the excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons poses a significant threat to peace and security, as well as to the social and economic development of many countries. We pointed out the close relationship between the illicit trade in these arms and terrorism. Let me take this opportunity to reiterate that international cooperation to combat and eradicate the illicit trade in these types of weapons should be fostered within the United Nations and other forums.

Failure to achieve a tangible result in last year's review conference has been disappointing. Nevertheless, Turkey remains committed to the effective implementation and further strengthening of the United Nations Programme of Action on SALW.

In this context, let me also emphasize Turkey's continuing support for last year's United Nations General Assembly resolution, entitled "Towards an arms trade treaty: establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional

(Mr. Üzümcü, Turkey)

arms” (61/89), which was spearheaded by the United Kingdom and co-sponsored also by Turkey. We believe that such a treaty, regardless of which CD agenda item it falls under, will go a long way in curbing legally produced weapons falling into the hands of terrorists.

Another disarmament issue that we believe warrants further attention under agenda item 7 of the Conference on Disarmament is the illicit transfer and unauthorized access to and use of man-portable air defence systems or MANPADS.

There are an estimated half a million MANPADS in the world today. While these are legitimate weapons of self-defence, thousands are thought to be on the black market and, therefore, accessible to terrorists. MANPADS are attractive to terrorists because they are easy to use, highly portable and concealable.

The proliferation and unauthorized use of MANPADS pose an imminent and acute threat to civil aviation and anti-terrorist operations. In the hands of trained terrorists, these weapons can cause substantial civilian casualties. Since installing effective countermeasures on civilian aircraft would be a time-consuming and costly process, these aircraft are likely to be vulnerable to MANPADS attacks for the foreseeable future.

The threat emanating from unauthorized proliferation and use of MANPADS is already recognized by the international community. The two consecutive United Nations General Assembly resolutions, co-sponsored by Turkey, Australia, Argentina, Kenya and Thailand, the OSCE principles for export controls of MANPADS, and the Wassenaar Arrangement’s “Elements for export controls of MANPADS” are a few examples of this recognition.

What remains now is for the international community to act decisively to improve stockpile security, airport security, aircraft protection, collection and destruction of old and surplus MANPADS and strengthen export controls in countries that import and manufacture those weapons.

Turkey, in this context, fully supports the efforts of the international community, particularly those within the United Nations, OSCE and the Wassenaar Arrangement, to establish stricter export controls and information exchange to combat the proliferation of MANPADS. The lists developed by the United Nations, OSCE, the EU and the Wassenaar Arrangement bring valuable and needed guidance for the issue of MANPADS export and import licences.

Turkey maintains the view that monitoring and controlling the activities of producers, exporters, brokers, transporters, importers and end-users of MANPADS are essential for eradicating illicit trade. Hence, a comprehensive approach is needed encompassing not only export controls but also import and transshipment controls as well.

As a main co-sponsor of the United Nations General Assembly resolution on prevention of the illicit transfer and unauthorized access to and use of man-portable air defence systems, Turkey believes that discussing this issue at the CD may indeed prove useful and fruitful.

(Mr. Üzümcü, Turkey)

At the same time, we share the understanding that MANPADS or any other so-called “new issue” that is in line with the disarmament and arms control mandate of the CD should not be a substitute for the core issues on the CD agenda.

Having mentioned arms control and export control regimes, let me stress at this juncture that Turkey supports all efforts in the field of sustaining international security through arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament. Being close to regions posing high risks of proliferation, Turkey takes a firm stance against this threat.

The basic precept in Turkey’s armament and export policies is zero tolerance for proliferation. In this regard, Turkey is party to all instruments and regimes in the field of non-proliferation. In this context, Turkey became party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 1979. Turkey has also been party to the Chemical Weapons Convention since 1997, the Biological Weapons Convention since 1974 and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty since 2000. In 1996, Turkey became a founding member of the Wassenaar Arrangement, which I mentioned earlier, regarding export controls of conventional weapons and dual-use equipment and technologies. Turkey joined the Missile Technology Control Regime in 1997, the Zanger Committee in 1999, as well as the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Australia Group in 2000. As mentioned in previous statements, Turkey also fully supports United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 and the Proliferation Security Initiative.

We believe that these instruments and control regimes, when effectively implemented, will go a long way in preventing weapons from finding their way into the hands of terrorists.

Before I conclude, let me touch on round two of the first phase of informal discussions. As we are about to embark upon the second round, we would like to underscore the importance of confidence-building through information-sharing and transparency in order to reach the goal of nuclear disarmament, as well as the special importance we attach to the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Üzümcü for his statement and the very kind words addressed to the Chair related to yesterday’s concert. I would now like to give the floor to the Ambassador of Japan, Ambassador Sumio Tarui.

Mr. TARUI (Japan): Mr. President, since my delegation is taking the floor for the first time under your presidency, let me, at the outset, congratulate you, Ambassador March, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of our full cooperation.

Enhancing the level of openness and transparency in armaments greatly contributes to building stronger confidence among States, and can lead to the prevention of the excessive accumulation of arms, and arms races. From this perspective, Japan attaches particular importance to transparency in armaments (TIA) as a measure for promoting international peace and security.

(Mr. Tarui, Japan)

Indeed, it was based on this conviction that Japan, in cooperation with the then European Community, submitted to the forty-sixth United Nations General Assembly (1991) the resolution entitled “Transparency in armaments”, which established the United Nations Conventional Arms Register. Since then, along with its increasing number of participating countries, the Register has been steadily improved through the beneficial discussions at the triennial meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE). The growing number of arms transactions recorded with the Register indicates that its significance and effectiveness is widely recognized. Japan, as one of the initiators of this regime, is very pleased to see that it has become well established as one of the key international instruments for ensuring transparency in military matters. Additionally, last year in the General Assembly the draft resolution (61/77) endorsing the report of the United Nations Secretary-General, including the recommendations contained in the GGE’s consensus report, was adopted with extensive support from United Nations Member States. We must continue to strive for the universalization of the United Nations Conventional Arms Register, and Japan will spare no effort to that end.

In the focused debates on TIA last year, my delegation made reference to the significant and substantial relationship between the United Nations Conventional Arms Register and the efforts to create an arms trade treaty (ATT) within the United Nations framework. Ensuring the responsible transfer of weapons through an ATT and duly registering those transfers through the United Nations Arms Register would further improve the reliability of the Register itself. In this light, the ATT and the United Nations Arms Register are closely connected as measures for enhancing international confidence-building. Based on the overwhelming number of countries that adopted the draft resolution on ATT in the United Nations General Assembly last year, a letter from the Secretary-General has already been dispatched by the United Nations Secretariat seeking the views of each country on this matter. For the purpose of facilitating the process of our endeavours, Japan strongly encourages each country to submit to the United Nations their position and views on an ATT. In this connection, we would like each country, when formulating their report to the United Nations Secretariat, to make reference, as a possible useful guide, to the letter recently sent by the sponsors of the resolution.

In the deliberations last year my delegation also drew the attention of the Conference to the necessity of examining tangible measures in the field of TIA within this forum. It is my delegation’s belief that discussions on measures to enhance TIA that lead to an environment conducive to the promotion of disarmament are obviously an important responsibility of the CD. Complementing the efforts that have been taking place in other forums and further improving global transparency in armaments is one of our essential undertakings. Japan is hopeful about, and open to, any proposal that will contribute to the attainment of this objective.

Finally, allow me to conclude by saying that my delegation believes we should commence an earnest examination into our previous proposals for, firstly, initiating discussions to identify issues that require further action in the field of TIA - which we are actually now doing very seriously under this agenda item, I understand - and, secondly, developing a feedback mechanism concerning the actual accomplishments and activities on TIA between the CD and other forums.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): Thank you very much, Ambassador Tarui, for your statement. I now give the floor to the delegation of Argentina, Mr. Marcelo Valle Fonrouge, who will be speaking on behalf of Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru, members of the Conference, on the issue of transparency in armaments.

Mr. VALLE FONROUGE (Argentina) (spoke in Spanish): Mr. President, since this is the first time I have had the honour of taking the floor since you took the Chair of this Conference on Disarmament, allow me at the beginning of my statement, on behalf of the delegations of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru, to express our pleasure at seeing you guiding our work.

These delegations, members of the Conference on Disarmament, wish to speak on item 7 of the agenda adopted at the beginning of this year, concerning transparency in armaments.

Until the end of the cold war, concern about a possible nuclear confrontation which would have endangered the very existence of the human race overshadowed concern about the proliferation and excessive stockpiling of conventional weapons. The reduction of the nuclear threat enabled the international community to shift its attention towards conventional weapons, whose deadly and destabilizing effect make them no less disturbing.

The huge stocks of conventional weapons in various parts of the world have diverted resources from important sectors such as health, education and development. The international community must make greater efforts to improve the socio-economic conditions of countries, always bearing in mind legitimate defence and security needs. Similarly, unlawful transfers of conventional weapons, often linked to destabilizing activities, constitute a long-standing problem which the end of the cold war has not been able to overcome.

In the early 1990s, an important instrument emerged which was intended to promote transparency among States: the Register of Conventional Arms (1992). This mechanism, as we know, recommends that States provide information concerning their acquisitions on the basis of a list of seven categories of conventional weapons: battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, large-calibre artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, and missiles and missile launchers.

On the occasion of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) held in Santiago in 1991, the region, which has also been involved in these developments, began a process of reflection on security in the western hemisphere. This initiative was continued with the meeting of experts on confidence-building and security-building measures in Buenos Aires in 1994 and the regional conferences in Santiago in 1995 and San Salvador in 1998, where transparency in the procurement of weapons was promoted as a confidence-building measure of major importance in inter-American relations.

In 1997 the General Assembly of OAS recommended the adoption of a legal framework concerning advance notification of procurement of significant weaponry included in the

(Mr. Valle Fonrouge, Argentina)

United Nations Register. The purpose was to ensure effective restrictions on conventional weapons which would make it possible to earmark more resources for economic and social development in the member States, in conformity with article 2 of the OAS Charter.

In this way, within the OAS framework, the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions was adopted in 1999. The purpose of the Convention is to contribute to openness and regional transparency in the acquisition of conventional weapons through the exchange of information concerning such acquisitions for the purposes of promoting confidence amongst the States of the Americas.

This instrument is an extremely important step forward on this subject, particularly in that it transforms the United Nations policy recommendation to Member States to provide information concerning their purchases to the Register of Conventional Arms into a legally binding commitment at the regional level. During the first meeting of the States parties to the Convention, held at the end of last year, 2006, the value of the instrument was highlighted as a tool for transparency which would lead to confidence-building among the countries of the western hemisphere, promoting peace, security and democratic governance. The aforementioned process, embracing the adoption of a large number of measures and actions which it is not appropriate to mention here, has had a very positive impact regionally and internationally, going beyond the area of security and defence to cover all the areas of relations between our countries and the outside world.

We are convinced that it is possible to obtain greater transparency not only in the acquisition of conventional weapons but also in drawing up common agreements guaranteeing that it is carried out in conformity with international law while recognizing States' national security and self-defence needs in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. In this connection, we consider that it might be useful to invite the delegates in this Conference to comment on or describe existing bilateral and regional mechanisms.

Finally, we consider that the Conference on Disarmament is a competent forum to develop practical measures which include consideration of the aspects related to the "excessive and destabilizing accumulation" of armaments, the transfer of high technology with military applications, and the identification of possible areas for harmonization between monitoring mechanisms and confidence-building measures in the sphere of armaments.

I should not like to complete this statement without indicating that we associate ourselves with the tributes paid on the eighth anniversary of the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines, and we are pleased at the fact that our region has the highest level of universality and compliance with its provisions.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): I thank the delegate of Argentina very much for his statement on behalf of Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru, members of the Conference.

(The President)

(spoke in English)

I now give the floor to the representative of Canada, Mr. Eric Walsh, who is going to make a statement on the Mine Ban Convention.

Mr. WALSH (Canada): Mr. President, as this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor under the Spanish presidency of the CD, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency and assure you of my delegation's full support. I would also like to join others in offering congratulations to Ambassador Petritsch on receipt of his well-deserved peace award.

The first of March marks the eighth anniversary of the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. This anniversary will be celebrated throughout Canada during the civil-society-organized Landmine Awareness Week and includes a number of events across the country, recognizing ordinary people who have made an extraordinary impact towards the goal of a mine-free world.

Ten years ago the Ottawa process began - the negotiation and signature of the global anti-personnel landmine ban convention in less than 14 months. And now, 153 countries - more than 80 per cent of the world - are party to the Convention. Numerous States not party to the Convention have effectively adopted its norms, making it, even at this early stage, one of the most successful disarmament treaties in history.

The Ottawa Convention has been a remarkable achievement in the annals of international disarmament and humanitarian and development cooperation. It has saved thousands of lives, limbs and livelihoods, and has clearly illustrated the reciprocal relationship between peace/security, humanitarian and development concerns. It has also demonstrated that an integrated, comprehensive approach to a complex problem that affects much of the world can generate significant, concrete results.

At a time when the global multilateral framework is under considerable pressure, the Convention also provides a tangible example of effective multilateralism involving most of the world's nations, United Nations agencies, international organizations and civil society.

Today is an opportunity for us to celebrate our collective accomplishments in mine action. But more important, it must also be an occasion to reaffirm our commitment to continue pressing for a world completely free of anti-personnel mines, and to continue our efforts to assist the people and communities that have been, and continue to be, victimized by this indiscriminate weapon.

Canada looks forward to continuing to work in close partnership with other leaders in the mine action community, including governments, United Nations agencies and civil society, to actively promote and implement the Convention and to reach our goal of a world free of the scourge of landmines.

The PRESIDENT: I thank very much the distinguished representative of Canada for his statement and I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Indonesia, Ambassador Wibisono, who will make a statement on the Mine Ban Convention.

Mr. WIBISONO (Indonesia): Mr. President, since this is the first time my delegation has taken the floor under your presidency, allow me to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of this high office and also to express my firm conviction that, under your able leadership, we can put fresh resolve into the Conference on Disarmament to achieve more productive and constructive deliberations. At the same time, I can assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation in our common endeavours.

I associate myself with the previous speaker in congratulating Ambassador Petritsch on receiving the award.

My delegation is taking the floor today to join other members who have spoken earlier to mark the anniversary of 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, or the Ottawa Convention, on 1 March. My delegation looks forward to celebrating this particular anniversary with happiness as well as pride.

On 20 February, or exactly a week ago, the Government of Indonesia deposited its instrument of ratification at the United Nations in New York, thus becoming the 153rd State party to the Mine Ban Convention. I really appreciate Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü of Turkey and Ambassador Caroline Millar of Australia reflecting this in their statements. Considering that Indonesia was one of the original signatories of the Convention in 1997, this deposition has been long awaited not only by the international community, but also by the Indonesian people in general. The process of ratification has indeed been long and arduous, given the circumstances of the transition period in Indonesia during the last 10 years.

By joining the Ottawa Convention Indonesia is once again manifesting its firm commitment to achieving a global disarmament regime in general and to creating a mine-free world in particular. It is our fervent hope that this step will be followed by other countries that remain outside the Convention, most particularly in the south-east Asia region, which is considered one of the most mine-affected regions of the world.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Wibisono for his statement, and I now see the delegates of Algeria and Venezuela, who have raised their nameplates to ask for the floor. I give the floor to the delegate from Algeria.

Mr. KHELIF (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, as this is the first time that the delegation of Algeria has taken the floor under your presidency, we should like to express our warm congratulations to you on your assumption of the presidency of the CD. We assure you that the delegation of Algeria will support you in your work and also take this opportunity to congratulate the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom on his appointment as coordinator for this issue. I would like to join the previous speakers in congratulating the Permanent Representative of Austria, Mr. Petritsch, on the prize that he has been awarded.

(Mr. Khelif, Algeria)

We should also like to express our sincere congratulations to the entire international community on the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on the prohibition of anti-personnel landmines, otherwise known as the Ottawa Convention. The Ottawa Convention is an ideal framework for dealing with the issue of landmines in a comprehensive manner, in keeping with the aspirations and hopes of the international community and, in particular, victims of landmines. It is also a framework for true partnership and solidarity between affected countries and donor countries, between States and intergovernmental organizations and between regional organizations and civil society.

The Convention, of course, will not restore lost lives or undo the permanent disabilities caused by these indiscriminate weapons. It will not resolve the deep psychological trauma that these weapons have engendered. However, this Convention is a cornerstone of efforts to ensure that there are no new victims and no fresh tragedies.

Since the adoption of the Convention, many achievements have been scored, as the Permanent Representative of Australia, as President of the Seventh Meeting of States Parties, has already mentioned. The States parties in Nairobi, at the first review conference on the Convention, adopted a framework and a road map for freeing the world from these heinous weapons. Since then, the States parties have been working each year to assess achievements and set future priorities. While a lot has been achieved, the most important task still lies ahead. The main challenge to the effectiveness of the Convention is the fact that it is not yet universal. Many States remain outside the framework of this instrument. On this occasion, I should like to convey to the representative of Indonesia our delight that his country has decided to join this noble human endeavour, and we renew our appeal to all countries that have not yet joined the Convention to do so in order to make these weapons history.

The second challenge is the huge number of landmines found all over the world. As an affected country with millions of anti-personnel landmines on its eastern and western borders, which it inherited from the colonial era, Algeria truly understands the magnitude of this tragedy and crisis. That is why it hopes for stronger international cooperation and assistance in order to help affected countries to meet their obligations.

Finally, we should like to reaffirm the willingness and continued commitment of Algeria to fulfilling its obligations under the Ottawa Convention.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): I thank the representative of Algeria for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair, and I now give the floor to the distinguished delegate of Venezuela.

Mr. ARIAS (Venezuela) (spoke in Spanish): Mr. President, since my delegation is taking the floor for the first time during your term, allow me to congratulate you on having taken on such a major responsibility, and to assure you that you can count on the full support of the delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

My country considers that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is a positive confidence-building measure intended to contribute to maintaining transparency in the

(Mr. Arias, Venezuela)

acquisition and sale of conventional weapons. Nevertheless, it would be appropriate to hold multilateral negotiations for the purpose of expanding the nature and scope of this Register, since its current shape does not reflect balance in the way in which disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation are dealt with.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela considers that the categories of weapons included in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms are discriminatory, since they ignore other types of weapons which in some cases constitute a greater threat to international peace and security. In this connection, it would be necessary for weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems and technological developments in this area to be included in the Register, thereby facilitating its universalization as a transitional measure towards the complete prohibition of such weapons, which is the only definitive solution for the dangers associated with such weapons.

It should be emphasized that, despite the existence of international agreements which ban, restrict and regulate weapons of mass destruction, the international community has no detailed inventories of stocks of such weapons, so that their inclusion in the Register would provide a much more comprehensive view of the matter.

We consider that the Register should be balanced, comprehensive and non-discriminatory, and should promote the national, regional and international security of all States, in conformity with international law. It is important furthermore to stress that the Register is a means of building confidence, as we understand it, and States' legitimate security concerns must be acknowledged, bearing in mind their right to acquire weapons in order to meet their self-defence needs.

As to the question of how to deal with item 7 on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament, my country's position is well known: we support the content of document CD/1693/Rev.1 with regard to the five Ambassadors' proposal, establishing among other important aspects that the Conference shall appoint a special coordinator under agenda item 7 entitled "Transparency in armaments" to seek the views of the members of the Conference on Disarmament on the most appropriate way to deal with the questions related to the item, taking into consideration all viewpoints without excluding any, and the most important suggestions it may receive.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): I thank the distinguished representative of Venezuela very much for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair, and I now recognize the delegate of Jordan, who has asked for the floor. I would like to wish him a warm welcome as a new observer State in the Conference. Mr. Al Hussein, you have the floor.

Mr. AL HUSSEINI (Jordan) (spoke in Arabic): Mr. President, allow me, at the outset, to express our thanks and appreciation to you and to the members of this august Conference for approving the participation of Jordan in the 2007 session as an observer. I should also like to thank you for allowing me to take the floor to make this statement.

(Mr. Al Hussein, Jordan)

Jordan attaches great importance to the issue of anti-personnel landmines. The immense suffering which these landmines cause victims and the physical and psychological harm that they do were the main reasons for the rapid establishment of a Convention in the area of disarmament, namely, the Convention on the prohibition of anti-personnel mines, better known as the Ottawa Convention. The watchword and the purpose of the Convention was putting an end to suffering.

Jordan makes every effort to put an end to this suffering, not only at the national level, but also at the international level. We are proud to be hosting and presiding over the eighth meeting of States parties to the Convention due to be held next November. Indeed, Jordan will be the first State in the Middle East to host this meeting and hopes to use it to draw the attention of the international community to this issue.

The upcoming meeting will follow on the heels of the tenth anniversary of the Oslo Convention of 1997 and will take place two weeks before the tenth anniversary of the opening of the Ottawa Convention for signature. It will be an opportunity to review what has been achieved so far and to contemplate the success stories that have accompanied this process. With Indonesia having ratified the Convention a week ago, the number of States parties has risen to 153.

To date approximately 40 million landmines have been destroyed by States parties, including Jordan. Seven States parties have so far declared that they have accomplished the implementation of article 5, concerning the destruction of landmines in their territory. There has also been great progress in other States parties with regard to implementation of this article. We must recall here the new standards that the Convention sets for disarmament treaties, through the commitments that it makes to victims of landmines.

The road to achieving this objective is still long and full of challenges. For a country like Jordan which is faced with the risks of landmines and their potential impact on its children, women and men, the issue of anti-personnel landmines remains a major problem that requires every possible effort not only to resolve it but also to mobilize worldwide attention to the issue.

Jordan hopes that the upcoming meeting will be an occasion to review the challenges to implementation of the Convention and rational and effective ways of overcoming them. Jordan is pleased to be joining the States parties at the forthcoming meeting of States parties to the Ottawa Convention and hopes that it will be an occasion for States non-parties to join our collective efforts to end this humanitarian tragedy.

The PRESIDENT (spoke in Spanish): I thank the delegate of Jordan very much for his statement and note that no other delegation has asked for the floor. Consequently, I inform the Conference on Disarmament that the next plenary meeting will be held on Tuesday 16 March at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.