



General Assembly

Fifty-eighth session

First Committee

13th meeting

Wednesday, 22 October 2003, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

Chairman: Mr. Sareva (Finland)

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

Agenda items 62 to 80 (continued)

Thematic discussion on item subjects and introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security items

The Chairman: This morning the Committee will continue with the second phase of its work, namely, the thematic discussion on item subjects, as well as the introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament-related and international security agenda items.

Delegations are today invited to make statements on conventional weapons, as well as to introduce draft resolutions. As I indicated yesterday, if we have time available, I will also invite delegations to make statements and introduce draft resolutions on items pertaining to the subject areas originally intended for tomorrow.

Mr. Caughley (New Zealand): In New Zealand's capacity as Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum, I have the honour to address the First Committee on behalf of Pacific Islands Forum members represented at the United Nations, namely, Australia, Fiji, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and my own country, New Zealand.

The Pacific region, despite its mostly peaceful history, is not immune to the security challenges of the twenty-first century. Pacific Island countries recognize the effectiveness of working collaboratively to address global and regional security challenges. At the 2000 Pacific Islands Forum Meeting, members agreed to the Biketawa Declaration, which provides an overarching mechanism for Forum Countries to discuss and address regional security issues in a cooperative, consultative manner.

In the past year, the Pacific Islands Forum has tackled head-on the challenges posed by international terrorism and the spread and misuse of small arms and light weapons in the region. Pacific Island countries developed a regional framework — the Nasonini Declaration — to address the problem of global terrorism. In August of this year, leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum endorsed the speedy passage of model legislation to advance counter-terrorism under that process.

Similarly, Pacific island countries have adopted a regional approach to combating the spread of small arms. Recent studies have outlined the significant social and economic costs of the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons in small Pacific island communities. Those studies have identified disparities in controls and penalties and permissive attitudes to the ownership and management of small arms, which create loopholes that have been exploited by arms traffickers to gain access to the region. While we have achieved progress in some

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.

03-57609 (E)

0357609

areas, improving national legislation and regional coordination in customs controls, law enforcement and armoury management will be essential to combat unscrupulous arms traders and other opportunists.

Effective implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is a key priority for the Pacific region. We have implemented the Programme of Action in many ways: by developing a common regional approach to weapon control, reflected in a document called the Nadi Framework; and by holding a regional workshop, co-hosted by Japan and Australia in Tokyo in January 2003, to enhance cooperation in legal and institutional areas, law enforcement and effective stockpile management. We have also implemented the Programme of Action by participating actively in the regional segment of the Biennial Meeting of States on the Implementation of the 2001 Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons, which was held in New York in July of this year, as well as through this year's endorsement by Pacific Islands Forum leaders of model weapons-control legislation based on the Nadi Framework. Leaders have encouraged Forum members to adopt the model weapons-control legislation to the fullest extent possible, while taking into account different domestic situations.

The region has an ongoing commitment to addressing the small arms threat. To solidify the progress made at two earlier workshops, the Governments of Australia, Japan and New Zealand, and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific are currently considering a proposal to hold a further regional meeting to promote implementation of the draft weapons-control bill. Forum members wish to thank the Japanese Government for its generous ongoing support for the region's efforts to tackle the small arms challenge.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the police and military support Pacific island countries have extended to Solomon Islands, at the invitation of its Government and consistent with the principles of collective security, to overcome instability and lawlessness caused in part by the spread of small arms. That effort has seen the return of over 75 per cent of the high-powered military weapons removed earlier from the Royal Solomon Islands Police armoury.

The past decade has presented Pacific Islands Forum members with security threats not seen before. Our history of friendly relations gives us an advantage. Pacific Islands Forum members will continue to address security challenges through shared commitment and pragmatic, solutions-oriented approaches.

The Chairman: I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/58/L.1.

Ms. Notutela (South Africa): It is a pleasure for my delegation to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/58/L.1 on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, on behalf of Colombia and Japan.

The draft resolution builds upon resolution 57/72 of 22 November 2002 and incorporates important updates and decisions as mandated by, among others, the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The first Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action was recently held, in accordance with the Programme of Action. Furthermore, a decision on the date and venue of the United Nations conference to review progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action needs to be taken at this session of the General Assembly.

In that regard, the draft resolution addresses the positive outcome of the Biennial Meeting of States, which was ably chaired by Ambassador Inoguchi of Japan. Recognition is also given to the importance of national reports submitted by Member States on the implementation of the Programme of Action, as well as to regional efforts in support of the Programme of Action.

The draft resolution also addresses the successful conclusion — as a result of the skilful chairpersonship of Ambassador Rakesh Sood of India — of the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on the feasibility of developing an international instrument to enable States to identify and trace, in a timely and reliable manner, illicit small arms and light weapons. In accordance with the Programme of Action and the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on the tracing of illicit small arms and light weapons, the draft resolution proposes that a decision be taken regarding the convening in New York of a

United Nations conference to review the implementation of the Programme of Action in 2006. The draft resolution also stipulates that the conference should be preceded by a preparatory committee meeting, to be held in New York from 9 to 12 January 2006. Furthermore, if necessary, a subsequent preparatory session may be held.

The draft resolution also proposes that a decision be taken on the establishment of an open-ended working group to enable States to negotiate an international instrument to identify and trace, in a timely and reliable manner, illicit small arms and light weapons; and that the working group should hold an organizational session in New York from 3 to 4 February 2004, in order to set the dates for its subsequent sessions.

The date and duration of the proposed review conference to review the implementation of the Programme of Action follows the same pattern established for the 2001 Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, for which the second preparatory committee meeting was held in early January 2001, and the Conference itself in July 2001. That Conference needed an intensive preparatory phase, of three meetings lasting five weeks in duration, owing to the fact that procedural issues needed to be finalized and the final document had to be developed. It is then expected that, for the review conference to be held in 2006, procedural issues will likely be based on those agreed to for the 2001 Conference. The 2006 review conference will be reviewing the existing Programme of Action. In addition, two biennial meetings would precede the 2006 review conference. It is therefore anticipated that an intensive preparatory phase similar to that followed for the 2001 Conference will not be necessary.

In accordance with the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts, the decision proposed in the resolution to establish an open-ended working group to negotiate an international tracing instrument is qualified by three elements, namely, that the character of the international instrument will be determined in the course of the negotiations; that the international instrument should be complementary to, and not inconsistent with, States' existing commitments under relevant international instruments; and that, finally, the international instrument should take into account States' national security and legal interests.

Another element that has been further developed is the issue of brokering. The outcome of the first Biennial Meeting pointed to the importance of that issue. For the past two years, Member States have been requested to provide their views on how to deal with illicit brokering activities. Against that background, the draft resolution requests the Secretary-General to hold broad-based consultations on the issue of illicit brokering and to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session on the outcome of those consultations. The purpose of that development is to provide more in-depth information on this issue in order to facilitate consideration of the matter by Member States at an appropriate time.

The draft resolution is therefore action-oriented and attempts to encapsulate the priorities of the international agenda on small arms through 2006. As in the past, we hope that the draft resolution will again be adopted without a vote.

Ms. Inoguchi (Japan): I have asked for the floor to support the draft resolution on small arms and light weapons contained in document A/C.1/58/L.1, which has just been introduced by the representative of South Africa on behalf of over 70 sponsors.

Japan introduced a draft resolution on small arms for the first time in 1995. Since then, the international community's awareness of the problems related to small arms has grown remarkably. Many initiatives have been undertaken, and activities are being carried out at the international, regional and national levels to address the issue of the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and transfer of small arms and light weapons. Japan welcomes such developments and is pleased to see that the United Nations has been actively engaged in confronting this issue.

In particular, the United Nations first 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, which was convened in July of this year, was an important milestone in this area. In my capacity as Chair of the Meeting, I would like, first of all, to express my deep gratitude to all the Member States, international and regional organizations and civil society participants that made substantial contributions to the successful outcome of the Meeting.

This year's draft resolution refers to the Biennial Meeting in welcoming not only the adoption by consensus of the Meeting's report but also the efforts made by Member States to submit approximately 100 national reports on the progress made in their implementation of the Programme of Action, which represents nearly a five-fold increase over the previous year.

Before going into more detail about the Meeting, I would like to briefly touch upon several noteworthy issues highlighted in the draft resolution.

I would first like to refer to the issue of tracing and marking. On the basis of the successful outcome of discussions held by the Group of Governmental Experts — which is reflected in the report (A/58/138) of the Secretary-General on the feasibility of developing an international instrument to enable States to identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons in a timely and reliable manner — we hope that an open-ended working group to negotiate an international instrument on that subject will be established. The commencement of negotiations on tracing and marking is the first, important follow-up step in the implementation of the Programme of Action.

Secondly, I would like to refer to the decision to create a road map leading to a second United Nations conference on the subject — to be held in 2006 — and its preparatory process. The draft resolution would authorize the convening of the second United Nations conference on small arms and light weapons in New York during the months of June and July 2006, with the preparatory committee process to begin in January 2006. Japan will continue to fully support that process and hopes to ensure continued momentum for the successful implementation of the Programme of Action in anticipation of the second United Nations conference on the subject.

Thirdly, I wish to mention the issue of brokering. The draft resolution requests the Secretary-General to hold broad-based consultations with all Member States, interested regional and subregional organizations, international agencies and experts in the field of brokering regarding further steps to enhance international cooperation in preventing, combating and eradicating illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons. Japan would like to encourage Member States to make every possible effort in that regard.

In my capacity as Chair of the first Biennial Meeting, I would like to take this opportunity to provide the First Committee with an overview of the main objectives and achievements of the Meeting.

As we all know, the primary objective of the Meeting was to provide an opportunity for States to share their experiences from the first two years of the implementation of the Programme of Action. But the Meeting went beyond that objective, in that it became a forum for strengthening existing partnerships and building new ones among States, international and regional organizations and civil society in the common struggle against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

Representatives from a total of 99 Member States and one Observer State made statements regarding the status of their national implementation of the Programme of Action, and several regional and international organizations — including United Nations agencies — made statements concerning the global and regional implementation of the Programme of Action. Furthermore, the participation of the community of non-governmental organizations, both in the conference room where the Meeting was held and through many side events, reinforced the partnership between States and civil society.

The Meeting provided an excellent opportunity to assess both the progress that has been made and the obstacles that have confronted us in implementing the Programme of Action in the two years since it was adopted, thereby helping to enhance our collective sense of ownership and responsibility for the process we initiated in July 2001. It also offered States the opportunity to build momentum towards mustering both the political will and the professional competence needed to combat the problem. The Meeting also contributed to strengthening the partnerships for action established through a variety of international assistance and cooperation initiatives.

The Meeting clearly demonstrated that multilateralism matters and that we can make it work. The success of the Meeting reaffirmed the importance of multilateral cooperation and demonstrated to the international community that multilateralism in the area of small arms disarmament is indeed functioning well. We believe that the Meeting marked an important milestone in strengthening the concerted efforts of the international community aimed at reducing the number

of victims of small arms. It is my fervent wish that all States will make full use of every opportunity to reinforce their commitment to the Programme of Action, building on the results of the Meeting to take concrete steps to strengthen national, regional and global efforts to eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects in the lead-up to the second biennial meeting, to be held in 2005, and the second United Nations conference on illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, to be held in 2006.

Finally, I would once again like to express our fervent wish that this draft resolution on small arms will be adopted without a vote and with as many sponsors as possible. I invite all delegations to come forward to co-sponsor the draft resolution.

Mr. Rivas (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to support the representative of South Africa's introduction of the draft resolution (A/C.1/58/L.1) entitled "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects", which was made on behalf of South Africa, Japan, Colombia and many other countries.

The Government of Colombia would like to express its satisfaction at the fact that the draft resolution just introduced by the representative of South Africa has garnered a large number of sponsors once again this year. The support of delegations for the draft resolution reflects the determination of the international community — previously expressed through the adoption of the Programme of Action of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects — to give this problem the consideration it deserves in the international agenda and to assume the responsibility to begin to resolve it.

Political support has continued to grow in order to address the issue of small arms and light weapons, and many efforts have been made at the local, national and regional levels. Given that the effects of the problem of small arms and light weapons vary throughout the world, the countless efforts being made at the national and regional levels are a reflection of the various approaches to different aspects of the problem.

The first 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 was

successfully held this year under the skilful chairpersonship of Japan's Ambassador in Geneva.

We must also acknowledge and encourage the invaluable work being carried out by non-governmental organizations to implement the Programme of Action. It is difficult to find a better example of cooperation between States and civil society in the United Nations than that which exists vis-à-vis small arms and light weapons.

Lastly, I would once again like to underscore the importance of maintaining the political momentum generated at the 2001 Conference in order to effectively address the problem of small arms and light weapons. That momentum is needed, given the figures provided by the *Small Arms Survey 2002* with regard to the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, which speak for themselves about the scope of the problem and its impact on international peace and security.

There are already 639 million small arms and light weapons in the world, 60 per cent of which — namely, 255 million — are illicit. Almost 4 million civilians were killed by such weapons in the 1990s, the large majority of them women and children. Tens of millions were also displaced in the same period — again, mostly women and children. Accordingly, the Secretary-General has rightly said that small arms and light weapons are truly weapons of mass destruction in today's world.

Therein lies the importance of the draft resolution introduced by South Africa on this subject. Progress made in that area has already been sufficiently pointed out. All that remains is for us to invite Member States that have not yet done so to become sponsors of the draft resolution. We also invite them to make progress in fully implementing the measures adopted in the Programme of Action at the national, regional and global levels, as well as in the context of the international cooperation and assistance that may be required by States to implement those measures and in the follow-up to the Conference.

The Chairman: I now give the floor to the representative of Mali to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/58/L.51.

Mr. Cheibani (Mali) (*spoke in French*): Despite the progress made, curbing the proliferation of, and illicit trafficking in, small arms and light weapons continues to be a major concern. It is therefore

appropriate to congratulate all States that have put in place prevention mechanisms and legislative measures to curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

It should be noted that, for its part, Mali has for many years made ongoing efforts to end the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, which represents an obstacle to development efforts. Among its initiatives aimed at curbing the illicit proliferation of small arms and at collecting them, I would simply like to refer to the peace flame ceremony celebrated annually in Mali, which has spread to other regions by virtue of its success.

Since the holding of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade of Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, my country has continued its efforts in the area of micro-disarmament. For example, Mali has been fully engaged in the development of the framework convention on international arms transfers that will be launched at Bamako this month.

Beyond the very praiseworthy efforts that have been made at the national level, my country also believes that it is necessary to take the fight against the illicit proliferation and trafficking in small arms and light weapons to the regional and subregional levels. In that regard, on behalf of States members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) — namely, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo — I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/58/L.51 under sub-item (l) of agenda item 73.

The preambular part of draft resolution, which is entitled “Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them” and which was also adopted by the First Committee last year, refers to the underlying reasons for the initiatives taken at the regional and subregional levels, as well as at the United Nations, in order to better address the problem of small arms. Given the scope of the problem and the ongoing threat to security posed by the illicit trade in small arms, illicit international transfers in such weapons constitutes both a danger to populations and a destabilizing factor for States. In that regard, it has become necessary to make efforts to expand cooperation in order to eradicate this scourge. The draft resolution being submitted for approval by the First

Committee therefore employs the language of the Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons.

In its operative part, the draft resolution takes note of efforts undertaken in this regard at the regional and subregional level, as well as by the United Nations. The draft resolution also refers to the establishment of national commissions to curb the proliferation of small arms. It also recommends that civil society organizations also become involved in the process of countering the proliferation of these weapons.

Although the draft resolution has not been drastically altered since last year, it has been made more specific; for example, by mentioning the renewal of the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa. In an effort to further harmonize the text as a whole, operative paragraphs 2 and 3 of last year's draft resolution have been inverted in this year's draft.

The member States of ECOWAS fully support all multilateral measures to put an end to the scourge of small arms and light weapons. We call on the international community to support the efforts of ECOWAS by enhancing cooperation and improving coordination in the overall effort to end the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons. We welcome the cooperation on the part of the Secretariat and the Department for Disarmament Affairs, and urge them to continue efforts to promote and support the various efforts in the West Africa subregion, particularly in supporting national commissions.

We also thank all States that have become sponsors of the draft resolution, in particular the countries of the European Union, as well as other important partners who have worked with us in drawing up the draft resolution, whose subject continues to be a major concern in the development of all our States. We also wish to thank the States that will become sponsors of the draft resolution.

In conclusion, as in previous years, we express the hope that the First Committee will adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

Mr. Udedibia (Nigeria): I am speaking on behalf of the African Group in this thematic discussion on conventional weapons.

The illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons constitutes a major impediment to the peace, stability, security and economic development of many countries, especially in Africa. Those arms continue to have devastating effects on the African continent, considering their capacity to exacerbate and prolong conflicts. Millions of lives have been lost and serious humanitarian crises have been created in the region, as a result of the illicit use of such weapons. Over the past decade alone, the use of illicit small arms and light weapons has claimed more than 20 million victims in Africa, many of whom were civilians, women and children. An estimated 2 million children have been killed, 5 million people have been handicapped, 12 million have been left without shelter and as many as 17 million have either been displaced or rendered refugees. In Africa the ever-expanding illicit trade in small arms is thriving at the expense of the continent's young people. A whole generation of African children is being inducted into a culture of violence marked by violent death and injury.

It is for that reason that, in the Protocol relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, African heads of State and Government expressed concern about the impact that the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons has on creating threats to peace and security in Africa and on undermining efforts to improve the standards of living of the African people. In addition, at the first ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, which was held in Durban, South Africa, on 8 July 2002, African heads of State and Government welcomed the Solemn Declaration of the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa, which was adopted in Lomé, Togo, in July 2000. The Declaration affirmed that the uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons, as well as landmines, poses a threat to peace and security on the African continent. African leaders have always used every opportunity to reaffirm their political commitment to harmonize, pursue and strengthen their actions with regard to the issue of the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking in small arms and light weapons, with a view to developing a comprehensive African response throughout the continent that is commensurate with their ambitions for Africa and for its peoples.

The death and destruction caused by illicit small arms and light weapons and the conflicts and instability

generated and sustained through their use necessitate urgent and concerted action in implementing the Programme of Action of the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The African Group reaffirms its commitment to the obligations undertaken in the Programme of Action and welcomes the outcome of the first 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, which took place here in New York last July. It also looks forward with hope to the next Biennial Meeting, which is to be held in 2005, as well as to the review conference to be held in 2006.

The African Group notes with satisfaction that the Group of Experts set up by the Secretary-General to study the feasibility of developing an international instrument to identify and trace small arms and light weapons has successfully completed its work. The African Group invites Member States to utilize the excellent opportunity presented by this positive development to commence negotiations leading to a reasonable outcome that can help to curb the illicit trade in small arms.

At the national level, individual African countries have taken various measures towards the implementation of the Programme of Action, in recognition of the consequences of the illicit circulation of small arms in their territories. The same spirit has guided efforts at the regional and subregional levels. Those efforts, and many more, have been undertaken out of deep concern over the devastating effects that the illicit trade in small and light weapons has on peace, security, stability and sustainable development in Africa.

The African Group expresses regret that, despite all our efforts, little concrete achievement has been recorded in controlling the illicit proliferation and circulation of small arms and light weapons on the continent. In fact, Africa has witnessed the continued proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons. In some cases, that has resulted in more problems associated with political instability and armed conflict. That unfortunate situation may not be due to a lack of effort or political will on the part of African States — either individually or acting in concert — but rather to the lack of means to meet the overwhelming challenge. As reported by the African Group at the Biennial

Meeting in July, the greatest difficulty encountered by African countries in this area is that of a lack of international cooperation, particularly from arms suppliers and manufacturers or their Governments who ensure the continued influx of illicit small arms into Africa.

The Programme of Action adopted important recommendations from the Organization of African Unity's 2000 Bamako Ministerial Declaration, but it fell short with regard to the Declaration's crucial aspect relating to illicit arms transfers to non-State actors. For Africa, one of the greatest difficulties in controlling the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons on the continent still remains the fact that those weapons are easily accessible to non-State actors. Africa's unrelenting call on the international community, and particularly on arms-producing and -supplying countries, to limit trade in small arms and light weapons to Governments and registered licensed traders has been largely ignored. That call is consistent with the one made by the Secretary-General on Member States to bring the trade in small arms and light weapons back under the control of States, with States being made accountable for their transfer. In that regard, the African Group wishes to note that the failure of the international community to hold arms manufacturers and their agents and brokers to account has also been largely responsible for the uncontrolled illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Africa, with its attendant consequences on the continent.

Experience has shown that one of the most effective strategies in dealing with the problem of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is to control it from the source. Many African countries are ill equipped to counter the massive flow of illicit arms into their territories from manufacturers and suppliers, particularly in situations where there are willing partners in the form of rebel groups and other similar groups. Any sincere effort on the part of the international community to tackle the menace of illicit small arms should necessarily include provisions for the imposition of appropriate sanctions on arms manufacturers and suppliers whose products are found in illicit hands. The African Group believes that that would be an important and transparent way of helping to minimize the problem of armed conflict in Africa and elsewhere.

In that regard, any document agreed by Member States should contain provisions for tracing the flow of small arms and light weapons from its source, in order to identify points of diversion into illicit networks. That should necessarily include a provision for the appropriate marking of arms as an integral part of the production process. Connected to that is the need to introduce the use of authenticated end-user certificates as a means of monitoring the export and transfer of small arms and light weapons. The African Group believes that developing national, regional and international controls on export licensing and end-user certificates is a crucial element in ensuring that the trade remains under Government control and is not diverted into illicit markets or illicit end-users.

The African Group is deeply concerned that the illicit small arms trade has always obstructed the implementation of arms embargoes imposed by the Security Council. To date, there is no United Nations arms embargo that has not been violated. The African Group welcomes the recent establishment of independent panels of experts and monitoring mechanisms by the Security Council to promote compliance with its arms embargoes. While arms embargoes are useful in controlling the illegal cross-border movement of small arms into conflict areas, they are ineffective in controlling and eliminating arms that already exist in such areas. The African Group therefore wishes to re-emphasize the need for effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes as part of United Nations peacekeeping mandates. Those mandates should also include weapons collection, disposal and destruction. That remains the most reliable way of avoiding a relapse into conflict. The African Group continues to call on the international community to appreciate the enormity and seriousness of the situation.

Recent studies have shown that illicit brokering in arms plays a significant role in the illicit arms trade. The establishment of an effective international regime to control the practice has therefore become necessary. The African Group calls on Member States to abide by their commitments to enhance international cooperation and the exchange of information as a prelude to the establishment of such a regime.

The African Group calls on the international community to intensify efforts at investigating, identifying and addressing the link between the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and the illicit

exploitation of natural and other resources, particularly those of poor countries, such as those in Africa. It is common knowledge that proceeds from the illegal exploitation of natural resources are channelled into funding the illicit arms trade.

The cooperation and assistance of the international community will be absolutely necessary in confronting the negative effects of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in the most affected countries and regions. It is in the light of that fact, together with the need to implement the United Nations Programme of Action on small arms, that African countries have been participating actively, mostly as recipient States, in the Group of Interested States in Practical Disarmament Measures. For that reason, the African Group is disappointed at the fact that a draft resolution on the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures, which is very important to Africa, will not be submitted during this session.

Mr. Rowe (Sierra Leone): I shall be speaking on three categories of conventional weapons.

During the general debate on all disarmament and international security items on the agenda of the First Committee, my delegation stated its views on certain aspects of the problem of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. My delegation associates itself with the statement made on that issue by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the African Group, as well the statements made by the representatives of South Africa, Mali, Japan, Colombia and others. For obvious reasons, Sierra Leone has co-sponsored all the draft resolutions now before us on small arms. In our view, all of them take into account, if not in letter then in spirit, the outcome of the recently held first 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. The implementation of the draft resolutions that we believe, and hope, we will adopt next week relating to small arms should be seen in the context of the Programme of Action.

The Programme of Action obviously has a number of weaknesses; I mentioned one of them in my statement last week. However, in our view, the Programme of Action is the most comprehensive blueprint at the disposal of the international community for curbing the scourge of the illicit trade in small arms

and light weapons. It charts the way forward in our efforts at the national, regional and global levels to save the lives of millions of people, especially innocent civilians in rebel armed conflicts in many developing countries.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is not the cause of conflict — for example, in our subregion of West Africa. However, it has become one of the principal instruments of mass destruction in the world today. We have to recognize that, and respond accordingly and resolutely. Therefore, in my delegation's opinion, we must view and use the Programme of Action as a means of promoting measures — including, as appropriate, legally binding instruments — in the areas of identifying, marking, tracing, trading and re-exporting these weapons.

Allow me to mention two other categories of conventional weapons.

As a State party of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction — otherwise known as the Mine Ban, or Ottawa, Convention — the delegation of Sierra Leone is pleased to be a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.1/58/L.43, regarding the Convention. We do so not merely because we are a State party, but also because of our deep regret over the fact that anti-personnel landmines have caused, and continue to cause, great human suffering in conflicts throughout the world. The large number of sponsors of the draft resolution — at the moment, I believe that includes almost half the entire membership of the United Nations — also reflects that regret, in addition to being an expression of the determination of the international community at large to rid the world of those small and often inexpensive, but vicious, weapons.

Fortunately for us, rebels made only relatively limited use of anti-personnel landmines in their 11-year war against the people of Sierra Leone. I say fortunately because we are aware of the bitter experiences of our sister African countries, such as Angola and Mozambique. In Sierra Leone it is reported that less than 150 anti-personnel mines were unaccounted for at the end of the rebel war. The number of casualties from the use of anti-personnel mines, if any, is not known. However, from a humanitarian perspective, a single anti-personnel

landmine used, or still buried somewhere in any theatre of armed conflict, is one too many.

That is why Sierra Leone, as a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.1/58/L.43, is joining others in reaffirming its determination, as expressed in the second preambular paragraph of the draft resolution, to put an end to the suffering and casualties, whatever the numbers, caused by anti-personnel mines. There is of course the other dimension of the problem, namely, its negative impact on post-conflict economic and social reconstruction and development. The use of anti-personnel mines creates new categories of persons with physical disabilities and places a heavy strain on the already weak health-care sectors of mine-affected developing countries. In that connection, operative paragraph 6 of the draft resolution addresses our hope that all concerned will cooperate in promoting and supporting the care, rehabilitation and integration of victims of anti-personnel mines.

As a State party to the Mine Ban Convention, Sierra Leone recognizes its obligations under that treaty. We are committed to its full and effective implementation and to compliance with its provisions. As a first step, I am pleased to inform the First Committee that Sierra Leone will soon forward its initial report under article 7 to the Secretary-General. We share the view that reporting under article 7 is an important tool in measuring the Convention's implementation and assessing the needs of mine-affected States.

Finally, I would like to turn to another instrument that is closely related to the anti-personnel landmines Convention. I am referring 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, which is also known as the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Last year, we were a sponsor of resolution 57/74, on the implementation of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. We are once again pleased to be a sponsor of this year's draft resolution on the subject, which is contained in document A/C.1/58/L.50.

Our decision to continue to be a sponsor of that draft resolution is based on two premises. First, it is consistent with our policy of contributing, as far as possible and within our modest capabilities, to the universality of multilateral disarmament and arms

control regimes, including those that are closely linked to international humanitarian law. Indeed, our objective is to help promote the attainment of universality for all multilateral instruments aimed at human security — instruments ranging from those on anti-personnel landmines and small arms and light weapons, to nuclear, chemical, biological and other weapons of human destruction.

Secondly, it is in our own national interest to associate ourselves with at least the principal elements of the draft resolution. As a country emerging from an armed conflict, we are concerned about the dangers posed to civilians from anti-personnel landmines that may have been planted by rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). But we are more concerned about the strong possibility of the existence of unexploded ordnance and explosive remnants of war. The war is definitely over, but efforts to cope with the consequences of the conflict have only just begun. For instance, farmers have returned to their farms. However, as they plow their rice fields they do not know what their farm implements will strike in areas that may have been used as underground ammunition dumps. They do not know whether or not their children will pick up war material believing that it could be used as a toy — and out of curiosity try to dismantle it — only to be injured or even killed.

We cannot underestimate the risk that Sierra Leoneans, especially those in the countryside, face from unexploded munitions and explosive remnants of war. In the 1999 Lomé Peace Agreement with the RUF rebels, we addressed this problem under article XIX by making provision for the exchange of information about the positions and descriptions of all known unexploded bombs and explosive ordnance devices, as well as minefields, booby traps, wire entanglements and all other physical or military hazards. Those may still exist in the forests and hills of parts of the country. Therefore, we have to inform the civilian population about these hazardous devices and about the possibility of their existence in parts of the country. The need to raise awareness about the existence and the humanitarian consequences of explosive remnants of war in Sierra Leone is obvious. That is one of the reasons why Sierra Leone, a signatory to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, has joined in sponsoring draft resolution A/C.1/58/L.50.

The necessary measures required for Sierra Leone to become a party to the Convention are under consideration by my Government. Meanwhile, my delegation is following with interest all activities in the United Nations system related to unexploded remnants of war, as well as discussions on a proposed instrument in that regard that are part of the international disarmament and international security agenda.

Ms. Jutzi (Canada): An important dimension of our work has broad societal impact, directly affecting people in their daily lives and in their immediate communities. How we approach and deal with many conventional-weapons issues goes well beyond traditional arms control. Much of it is impelled by human security, by humanitarian concerns and by international humanitarian law. It is indeed positive that progress has been witnessed in those areas in the past year, reflecting collective determination to address the issues of small arms, conventional weapons — including explosive remnants of war — and landmines, although much still remains to be achieved.

Every week small arms and light weapons claim an average of 10,000 lives. They are the weapons of choice in current armed conflicts, killing an estimated 300,000 people a year in conflict situations alone. From small handguns to automatic assault rifles, these instruments of social and economic destruction have moved beyond traditional battlefields and war-torn regions: they have moved into our streets and into our homes. They affect developing and developed nations alike.

The issue of small arms has gained increased visibility since the adoption 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, in July 2001, and the recently held first Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action, which took place in July 2003. Governments, non-governmental organizations and international and regional agencies have all worked together to implement that impressive framework for concrete action. We welcome those efforts and the work that has been achieved to date. The fact remains, however, that small arms and light weapons still produce mass deaths and still continue to destroy communities. We must use our time and resources wisely if actual progress is to be made, leading into the 2005 Biennial Meeting and the 2006 Review Conference.

Progress must continue on curbing the availability and misuse of small arms. Increased attention must be given to the issue of State responsibility for arms transfers, both transfers between States and transfers to non-State actors, as well as to such issues as the misuse of small arms by law enforcement officials.

Addressing the multiple challenges posed by small arms is a daunting task, but the cost of the availability and misuse of those weapons is even more staggering — to economic development, to basic services such as health and education and to community livelihoods. We ignore this tragedy at the peril of human, regional and, ultimately, global security.

Canada's primary goal in supporting small-arms initiatives and advancing the implementation of the Programme of Action is to make people and their communities safer. That should be what motivates us all here, namely to stop the death and human suffering caused by small arms. There are many facets to our work on small arms, but the human focus must remain our guiding principle. That people-centred approach must also be our benchmark to measure progress and to further the work to address these far-reaching and important issues. Our hope is that the work of the First Committee will contribute towards achieving that goal.

Let me now turn to two other areas with humanitarian dimensions.

The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) is a flexible arms control instrument whose purpose is to prohibit or restrict the use of certain weapons that may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have other indiscriminate effects, with a focus on balancing military needs with humanitarian concerns. Canada continues to encourage States not parties to the Convention to review their positions and to consider acceding to the Convention. We welcome Chile, the most recent adherent.

In December 2002, States parties established a group of governmental experts to negotiate an instrument to address the post-conflict humanitarian concerns associated with "explosive remnants of war". The term explosive remnants of war describes weapons that have not worked as designed and that remain on the ground in the target area after hostilities have ceased. The term encompasses, but is much broader than, "unexploded sub-munitions from cluster

bombs” — a problem identified during recent conflicts — and “abandoned ordnance”.

Canada has been active in the deliberations on explosive remnants of war. We want the next round of negotiations to culminate in a legally binding instrument that comprehensively addresses the humanitarian problems of explosive remnants of war. We believe that should be possible. The solutions must involve the means to prevent ordnance from becoming unexploded, the provision of warnings to civilian populations of the dangers of unexploded and abandoned ordnance and the means to ensure the rapid and safe post-conflict clearance of unexploded and abandoned ordnance. The results must make a difference on the ground in post-conflict environments and in people's lives. Canada is committed to international efforts to minimize the effects of explosive remnants of war through clearance, recording and transfer of information, risk education and assistance and cooperation.

Canada also believes it is important that States parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons develop and agree on a broad mandate to negotiate a legally binding protocol that deals with the humanitarian problem of anti-vehicle mines in all its aspects. International humanitarian law covering those weapons must be reinforced to reflect that irresponsible use of anti-vehicle mines hinders humanitarian operations and impacts on civilians. We therefore recently co-sponsored a United States-led proposal to address aspects of the humanitarian impact of anti-vehicle mines.

At the Second Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, in December 2001, States parties agreed to extend the scope of application of the Convention as a whole, so that its existing Protocols would also apply in situations of non-international armed conflict. Canada became the first State party to deposit its instrument of acceptance of that amendment, in July 2002. Almost two years since that amendment, we are two ratifications away from entry-into-force. Canada believes it is important that the amendment receive the required 20 ratifications by at least December 2003, in time for the 28th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, in order that we may proudly point to the amendment as another advancement for international humanitarian law. We urge all States

parties that have not yet done so to ratify the amendment as soon as possible.

Canada intends to make a detailed statement on landmines two weeks from now in the General Assembly debate on mine action. In this forum, we want to reiterate our expectation that the core humanitarian objectives of the Ottawa Landmines Convention will be realized through continued progress and positive strides. We also wish to emphasize our commitment to ensuring a successful 2004 Review Conference, in Nairobi, Kenya, that contributes to achieving that goal. To lend political impetus, we encourage representation at the highest possible level by all States and organizations at the high-level segment, which is planned for 3 December 2004.

True security must encompass all dimensions, from weapons of mass destruction to conventional arms. Human security must always be at the forefront of our preoccupations, as a guiding principle. Canada is most encouraged by recent progress, and looks forward to the continuing contribution that can be made by the First Committee and its members to achieving a secure world for all.

The Chairman: I now give the floor to the representative of Nigeria to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/58/L.13.

Mr. Udedibia (Nigeria): I apologize for asking for the floor once again. On behalf of the African Group, I wish to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/58/L.13, entitled “United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa”.

The Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa has continued to carry out activities in support of the efforts of African States in the areas of peace and security. The draft resolution considers the important role that the Regional Centre can play in promoting confidence-building and arms-limitation measures at the regional level. It highlights the fact that the Centre has received an increasing number of requests from Member States in the African region for substantive support for several peace initiatives and conflict-resolution activities in the region.

The draft resolution further highlights the fact — supported by the Secretary-General — that very limited financial contributions have been made to the Centre, despite continued fund-raising efforts. Out of concern that the continued financial difficulties of the Centre

are impairing its ability to realize its full potential and to adequately fulfil its mandates, the draft resolution emphasizes the need to provide the Centre with the necessary resources to enable it to strengthen its activities and carry out its programmes. The draft resolution appeals to all States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and foundations to make voluntary contributions in order to strengthen the programmes and activities of the Regional Centre and facilitate their implementation. The draft resolution reaffirms strong support for the revitalization of the Centre itself, and requests the Secretary-General to provide the necessary support to the Centre in order to produce greater achievements and results.

The draft resolution further appeals to the Regional Centre to take steps — in cooperation with the African Union, regional and subregional organizations and African States — to promote the consistent implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

In terms of substance and objectives, the draft resolution is the same as the one submitted by the African Group during the fifty-sixth session. In the past, this draft resolution has always been adopted without a vote by the General Assembly. The African Group would appreciate the support of all Member States in adopting the draft resolution without a vote at this session.

The Chairman: I now give the floor to the representative of France to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/58/L.46.

Mr. Rivasseau (France) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of France and the Netherlands, I would like to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/58/L.46 to the First Committee at the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. The draft resolution is entitled “Promotion at the regional level in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe of the United Nations Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects”. I would like to thank all the countries that provided advice regarding the introduction and improvement of our draft. It was thanks to their assistance that this draft resolution, which we hope will be adopted by consensus, is being introduced today. We continue to listen to the advice of all delegations in order to achieve a draft resolution that has the unreserved

support of all States. If all agree, we remain open to making further improvements to the text of the draft resolution.

Curbing the trade in small arms is a major concern for the international community. That concern, which was underscored by the Programme of Action, is simultaneously a global, regional and national concern. We in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) have ourselves faced a number of serious problems in connection with that trade. The conflicts that took place in the former Yugoslavia and the changes in Eastern Europe have led to a dangerous increase in the trafficking in small arms and light weapons throughout the continent. Those weapons can today be found within our national territories. However, the illicit trafficking in those weapons has unfortunately not been limited to the European continent; it also exists in conflict regions. Weapons from the Balkans have already been found on the African continent. The international peacekeeping force in Africa has also noted that non-State actors have access to these weapons through an uncontrolled trade. That contagion could affect other regions of the world tomorrow.

Like regional efforts in other parts of the world, the efforts of the OSCE in Europe have led to beneficial results for all. The international community as a whole should support regional efforts. Each of those efforts has its own logic, and no single action is necessarily a model for other regions. But they are mutually complementary and serve to contribute together to an overall objective, namely, our common objective.

At the regional level, the OSCE this year adopted eight far-reaching best-practice guidelines that were the result of considerable work. The draft resolution submitted by the Netherlands and France seeks to emphasize the measures necessary to implement the United Nations Programme of Action adopted in July 2001. It is both proper and important that the OSCE highlight its achievements in the area of small arms and light weapons. In its regional dimension, the draft resolution complements the important framework draft resolution on small arms and light weapons submitted annually by Japan and Colombia. It is also important that this draft resolution be submitted to the General Assembly again this year, given that this is the year that the OSCE will complete its work on the development of guidelines.

The framework draft resolution submitted by South Africa, Japan and Colombia is in line with the comprehensive United Nations Programme of Action. This year it focuses on such important operational aspects as tracing and marking, which France and the Netherlands very much support. In referring to regional contributions, separate draft resolutions have been deemed desirable this year. The high-quality draft resolution introduced by Mali, which we fully support, likewise emphasizes in particular regional action on the African continent.

The draft resolution we are introducing does not aim to be a customary one. It does not include the traditional final operational paragraph placing this item on the agenda of the next session of the General Assembly. I would like to remind the Committee that the European Union recommended that that paragraph be omitted from all draft resolutions of the First Committee. We, along with the Netherlands, therefore hope that we will be making a twofold contribution to the spirit of reform, both in form and substance.

We very much hope that our draft resolution will enjoy the full support of the General Assembly. We shall continue to explain our draft resolution and will, in the upcoming days, organize meetings to that end. Our delegation is also working individually in an effort to inform members of the Committee. I would like to thank representatives for their enthusiastic support for our draft resolution.

Mr. Sanders (Netherlands): I would briefly like to take the floor to speak in support of the Ambassador of France, who has just introduced draft resolution A/C.1/58/L.46, on the implementation at the regional level in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) of the United Nations Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

Together with France, the Netherlands has presented this draft resolution in its capacity as Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE. We are very happy to be able to do that together with France, because one of the central themes of our tenure as Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE has been the issue of trafficking in general. Obviously, however, that includes the important issue of illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons in our region. We are therefore particularly pleased that, together with France, we have

been able to introduce this draft resolution to the First Committee this year.

We think that the achievements of the OSCE are very much worth bringing to the attention of the General Assembly. What we have done in the OSCE in the field of small arms and light weapons — in particular the handbook on best practices — is important. We introduced the handbook at the first 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, which was held here in New York in July. That was a successful presentation that enjoyed very good attendance.

Finally, I would like to express the hope and the confidence of my delegation that the draft resolution will be adopted without a vote.

The Chairman: I give the floor to the representative of Sweden to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/58/L.50.

Ms. Essenli (Sweden): As this is the first time that I take the floor in the First Committee, I would first like to congratulate Ambassador Sareva on his assumption of the chairpersonship of this important Committee. My delegation is very confident that, thanks to his able and professional leadership, we will be successful. I pledge to him my delegation's full cooperation. Of course, my congratulations also go out to the other members of the Bureau.

I have asked for the floor to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/58/L.50, on the 1980 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). I do so on behalf of almost 60 sponsoring delegations. For the sake of brevity, I shall refrain from reading out all the names, but they are spelled out in the written copy of my statement. Sweden is very grateful to all the sponsoring countries for their support for this very essential draft resolution.

This is a very important year for the entire regime on certain conventional weapons. The treaty on the subject forms an essential and integral part of international law applicable to armed conflict. It is designed to provide a framework within which humanitarian concerns regarding conventional weapons

can be dealt with. We need the Convention to be a dynamic instrument responding to the many urgent humanitarian challenges before us. We also need the Convention to address the continued occurrence of civilians being afflicted by armed conflicts.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight two important issues, as reflected in this year's draft resolution. First, a Group of Governmental Experts has worked diligently throughout the year and will meet, for the third time this year, in November — a few weeks after the end of this session of the First Committee. The Group has addressed explosive remnants of war, mines other than anti-personnel mines and the issue of compliance. The draft resolution before you expresses well deserved support for the work conducted by the Group and encourages it and the Chairman-designate to submit a proposal for an instrument on explosive remnants of war, as well as reports on mines other than anti-personnel mines and on compliance, to States Parties for consideration at their meeting in November.

Sweden strongly believes that we must do our utmost in November in order to agree on an instrument on explosive remnants of war. Such an instrument should, in a credible way, contribute to minimizing the humanitarian consequences caused by explosive remnants of war. It is also important that we make substantial progress with regard to mines other than anti-personnel mines and on the issue of compliance.

Secondly, the draft resolution calls upon all States to become parties to the Convention and its Protocols and to adhere to its provisions, including the important amendment extending the scope of the Convention to include armed conflicts of a non-international character.

I would also like to mention, as a practical contribution to the rationalization of work in this Committee, that we are, this year, not asking for a report from the Secretary-General on ratifications and accessions to the CCW. Instead, we request that the General Assembly be periodically informed by electronic means.

Finally, let me express the strong support of my Government for the Chairman-designate and for the two coordinators in conducting their work. I can assure you that Sweden will work hard so that we can achieve real progress in November this year.

In conclusion, I wish to express the sincere hopes of all of the sponsors that the draft resolution will, as in previous years, be adopted without a vote.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of Sweden for her kind words addressed to the Chair and to other members of the Bureau.

Mr. Sanders (Netherlands): I would like to take the floor to speak in support of the statement made by the representative of Sweden, who has just introduced draft resolution A/C.1/58/L.50 on the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW).

The Netherlands attaches great importance to the revitalization of this important Convention that aims to reduce the humanitarian concerns raised by armed conflict, by prohibiting or restricting the use of certain conventional weapons, and by establishing post-conflict remedial measures to protect civilian populations.

One important element of the work in the CCW framework, as was mentioned by the Swedish delegation, is the negotiation of an instrument on the explosive remnants of war. This is a humanitarian priority, because the number of casualties caused by unexploded ordnance tends to exceed the number of victims caused by mines. Last year, the States parties to the Convention appointed the Netherlands to act as a coordinator to chair those negotiations.

I can inform this Committee that the negotiations have made considerable progress over the past year. The draft text focuses on post-conflict remedial measures to minimize the effects of unexploded ordnance. Such measures include clearance, removal, destruction, warning, provision of information, and cooperation and assistance, including victim assistance. There is also a voluntary preventive dimension in the draft text that aims to improve the reliability of munitions, as a consequence of which there would remain less unexploded ordnance on the battlefield after a conflict.

We very much hope that the States parties will be able to reach consensus on an instrument on explosive remnants of war at their upcoming meeting in the last week of November. It is my feeling that after three years of work on this issue in the CCW framework, the text is sufficiently mature to provide a good basis for a successful outcome.

Mr. Faessler (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland attaches the highest importance to multilateral cooperation in the area of conventional weapons within the general meaning of the term. I would like to briefly address the question of anti-personnel mines, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), and small arms and light weapons. These weapons — together with explosive remnants that remain in the ground after the end of hostilities — are real weapons of mass destruction. Every year they cause several hundred thousand deaths and injuries, particularly among civilian populations.

The general debate of last week showed how much importance delegations attach to the problem of conventional weapons and to the humanitarian concerns raised by the use of such weapons. Switzerland supports all First Committee draft resolutions on this issue and hopes that other delegations will also do so.

Our joint efforts to solve the problems caused by conventional weapons and our humanitarian concerns about the use of such weapons are part of a wider concern for human security and for the economic and social development of each country. Action by the international community on conventional weapons should therefore not only be closely coordinated with assistance programmes for economic and social development but should, if possible, be integrated into such programmes in a long-term development perspective. The simple fact is that there can be no economic and social development if illicit conventional weapons continue to cause innumerable civilian deaths and injuries and devastate entire regions. A number of delegations here represent States affected by these kinds of weapons and have clearly described those effects.

There is also a linkage between the problem of conventional weapons and the necessity to help the victims. In the field of victim assistance, Switzerland, in conjunction with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other organizations, has developed a strategic concept that includes victims of all forms of violence. It is urgent that we reframe that issue within the wider context of post-conflict reconstruction and incorporate in a strategy of longer-term development cooperation. Valuable experience has already been gained in various

countries, including Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Nicaragua and Mozambique. This global approach has been widely recognized and is also used by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Today, the international community has at its disposal a number of important multilateral instruments in the area of conventional weapons: the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its four Protocols, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty and the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. My country calls on all States which have not already done so to sign and ratify those instruments as soon as possible and to adhere to and implement all the measures specified in the Programme of Action.

On the subject of the Mine Ban Treaty, which will be discussed in the General Assembly, my country is very pleased with the success of the Fifth Conference of States Parties, which ended some weeks ago in Bangkok. That Conference enabled participants to measure the substantial progress that has been made since the Convention entered into force, especially with regard to the destruction of mine stockpiles. It underlined once again the importance of dealing with the question of non-State actors within the framework of the Ottawa Convention. Finally, the Bangkok meeting paved the way for the First Review Conference which will be held in Nairobi next year, and which will hopefully set in motion preparations for achieving a second important objective of the Convention, the clearing of anti-personnel mine fields.

On the subject of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, my country supports the work on explosive remnants of war. It hopes that it will soon be possible to adopt a new instrument on that subject, which will be substantial and legally binding. Switzerland also hopes that all States parties will be willing to accept a system of preventive technical measures for sub-munitions to prevent them from becoming explosive remnants of war. This would undoubtedly have a positive and important impact on the humanitarian situation in regions affected by the use of such munitions, without simultaneously weakening military capacity. Finally, in view of the many fatal accidents caused by mines other than anti-personnel mines, my country considers it necessary

that more specific regulations should be drawn up for this area within the framework of the 1980 Convention.

On the subject of small arms and light weapons, the category of conventional weapons that causes the largest number of victims, my country attaches great importance to the rapid 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. In this context, we are delighted with the success of the first Biennial Meeting, held in New York in July. That conference highlighted a number of important initiatives for implementing the Programme of Action, especially in the areas of export control, marking and tracing, security of stocks and strengthening of regional cooperation. The large number of national reports proves that States are willing to become increasingly active in the fight against illicit small arms and light weapons on a national and on a global level. Nevertheless, much remains to be done. It is essential that this commitment does not flag and that States are determined to achieve the goals they have set for themselves.

It is in the framework of this Programme of Action that we are seeking to improve the marking and the traceability of illicit small arms and light weapons. Switzerland, together with France, has been active for a long time in efforts to draft an international instrument on marking and tracing. Switzerland congratulates the Group of Governmental Experts on its final report. This group recommends the opening of negotiations with a view to drafting an international instrument on the marking and tracing of illicit small arms and light weapons. This recommendation is included in the draft resolution on small arms and light weapons proposed by South Africa, Japan and Colombia. My delegation hopes that this draft resolution will be adopted without a vote. If a negotiation process should be launched, Switzerland would be willing to chair the working group that would be established to that end. My country is committed to the elaboration of an instrument that will be an appropriate response to the challenges posed by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Mr. Esenli (Turkey): Mr. Chairman, since this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor, allow me at the outset to express my warmest congratulations to you on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. I am confident that under your able

leadership, the meeting will be successfully guided through its agenda. I assure you of my delegation's full cooperation throughout the proceedings. I also would like to take this opportunity to extend my congratulations to the other members of the Bureau as well.

Under agenda item 73, "General and complete disarmament", I wish to update the Committee on Turkey's activities regarding anti-personnel landmines.

In view of the human suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel landmines, the international community has long been endeavouring to take effective measures to prevent their use. The international efforts to rid the world of this scourge came to fruition by the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention in 1999. The security situation around Turkey had precluded it from signing the Convention at the time of its conclusion. Nevertheless, as an expression of its commitment to the humanitarian objectives of the Convention, Turkey declared three-year renewable comprehensive moratoria on all anti-personnel landmines, exports and transfers, starting in 1996 for two successive terms, and indefinitely in 2002.

Turkey had also engaged in certain initiatives that were aimed at mine-clearance in common border areas with neighbouring States, with a view to avoiding the use of such mines in the future. Paragon to the provisions of the Ottawa Convention and other relevant instruments on anti-personnel landmines, the initiatives taken by Turkey are comprised of even more rigorous compliance and verification measures.

In this respect, Turkey offered to conclude bilateral agreements with Bulgaria, Greece, Georgia and Azerbaijan that would free common border areas from anti-personnel mines. The bilateral agreement that was concluded with Bulgaria in March 1999 entered into force in May 2002. In compliance with the provisions of the agreement, mine-clearance activity has been finalized and the annual exchange of information for this year was realized in April 2003. The ratification process of the agreement with Georgia is under way at the Turkish Grand National Assembly.

In other mine clearance activities under way around the Armenian border of Turkey, 37,234 square metres of mined area and mines in the vicinity of security installations have thus far been cleared in this region. During these operations, a total of 14,000

mines have been cleared. Mine clearance along the Turkish border with Syria is another priority objective of Turkey. The Turkish Government, as another sign of firm commitment to fulfil the provisions stipulated by the Convention, has allocated \$17 million for mine-clearance activities in this region alone. Following the completion of mine-clearance activity, the land free of mines will be open for agriculture. By the same token, mine-clearance in other areas is also under consideration.

Turkey, as an observer at the First Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention in Maputo in May 1999, announced its intention to become a party to the Convention during the first decade of the new millennium. I would like to recall that, in a joint statement on 6 April 2001, Turkey and Greece announced their decision to concurrently conclude procedures that would make both States parties to the Ottawa Convention. It was also agreed that the instruments of ratification by Greece and accession by Turkey would be deposited simultaneously with the Secretary-General of the United Nations in due course. In line with this agreement, the appropriate constitutional procedures were completed in both countries and the Turkish and Greek Foreign Ministers together deposited their respective instruments of accession to and ratification of the Convention with the United Nations on 25 September 2003 in the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada. We sincerely hope that, with this important development, the efforts aimed at mine-clearance in our region in particular and the world in general will gain new impetus and vigour.

Mr. Albert (Democratic Republic of Congo) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to return, as all the other delegations have done, to the question of small arms. We are all aware of the future threat that nuclear weapons represent for international peace and security and so our efforts are more directed to prevent and dispel that future danger. However, it is well known that in today's world, the agent for terror and destruction and the massacre of thousands of human lives, ignoring principles of ethics and morality, is small arms and light weapons.

The various delegations within the First Committee have recognized through their statements that recent armed conflicts are fostered by the presence of small arms and light weapons. They also recognize that those weapons are also weapons of mass

destruction. Despite the efforts and the various mechanisms put into place at the global, regional, subregional and national levels to combat the traffic and uncontrolled trade in such weapons, they continue to fuel sources of conflict and threaten international peace and security.

The Secretary-General in the foreword to his excellent report contained in document A/58/138, entitled "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects", noted the following:

"... small arms and light weapons are also used by States to meet their legitimate self-defence and security needs. It is a well-known fact that the overwhelming majority of small arms and light weapons start their life cycle as legally produced commodities. However, many such weapons are diverted to illicit markets through unlawful transfers, theft or the breakdown of State control".

We recognize the efforts by delegations who have submitted various draft resolutions with the sole aim of combating this scourge. My delegation reassures them of its constant availability to support those efforts.

Since there is apparent consensus and a will to counteract this scourge, my delegation considers that it is time to recall to Member States their responsibilities to do so. My delegation suggests that there should be negotiations towards a binding convention prohibiting the trade and illicit trafficking in small arms. That would allow the producer States to take a firm commitment with a view to monitoring transactions in small arms, whereas importing countries would be called upon to limit their stockpiles of small arms and light weapons to those necessary to ensure their national security, and not to supply the black market and other sources of tension.

My delegation also considers that putting this convention in place will bring added value to existing mechanisms and initiatives in order to accelerate general disarmament that we all wish for.

Mr. Park (Republic of Korea): The Republic of Korea attaches great importance to the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW), like many other countries whose representatives have already spoken before me.

Since joining the CCW in May 2001, the Republic of Korea has participated in various efforts to

further develop the CCW regime. In this vein, my delegation is pleased to note that the Government of the Republic of Korea deposited its instrument for acceptance and the amended article 1 of the CCW in February this year. We further welcome China's ratification of the amendment to article 1 of the Convention.

Out of our concern for the serious humanitarian impact of the explosive remnants of war, my Government has made efforts to contribute to the ongoing negotiations in Geneva. We hope that these negotiations will lead to a successful outcome at the earliest possible date. My delegation notes with appreciation the substantial progress that has been made to this end throughout this year's negotiations.

Taking this opportunity, my delegation would like to voice its support for the commencement of negotiations on a legally binding instrument on anti-vehicle landmines. In this regard, I wish to express the strong support of my Government for the Chairman-designate and for the two coordinators in concluding their work successfully.

Finally, as in the previous year, the Republic of Korea is pleased to sponsor the draft resolution on CCW, tabled and just introduced by the Swedish delegation. We also hope that this draft resolution will be adopted without a vote as in previous years.

Mr. Shalita (Rwanda): This being the first time my delegation takes the floor in the First Committee in this session, I would like to begin by congratulating you and the Bureau upon your election, and on the excellent manner in which you have steered our work so far.

My delegation would like to align itself with the statement made on behalf of the group of African States by the representative of Nigeria.

Allow me to return to the issue of small arms and light weapons. The presence and massive proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons in Africa, particularly in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa and in West Africa, poses a great threat to peace, stability and socio-economic development, and in some cases threatens the very existence of nation States.

Rwanda has borne the brunt of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Following the genocide in 1994, thousands of genocidal killers fled to neighbouring countries where they remobilized with

the intention of returning to the country to continue the genocide. Despite several General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and an arms embargo against them, they remain active today and continue to receive illicit shipments of small arms and light weapons. The result of this for the Great Lakes region has been greater insecurity, indiscriminate killing and maiming of innocent civilians, displacement of tens of thousands of people, and economic stagnation or regression. In the case of neighbouring Burundi, the illicit trade has led to an upsurge in rebel attacks over the last 12 months, despite the establishment of a transitional Government comprising all signatories to the peace process.

Rwanda shares the view of the Group of Governmental Experts on Tracing Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, that the illicit trade sustains conflicts, exacerbates violence, contributes to displacement of civilians, and fuels crime and conflict. Rwanda welcomes the adoption by consensus of the report of the first 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, held in New York in July. We also welcome the recommendation of the Group of Experts on the feasibility of developing an international instrument to enable States to identify and trace, in a timely manner, illicit small arms and light weapons. We call for urgent action on this recommendation so that negotiations can begin to establish this international instrument. We commend the activities undertaken by Member States, the United Nations system, and civil society groups to implement the Programme of Action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade.

Rwanda is proud to be among those States that have designated national focal points to act as liaisons on the implementation of the Programme of Action. We are also among those States that have established national coordinating agencies to ensure holistic, integrated and coherent implementation of the Programme of Action.

It is our belief that the international community would achieve best results by focusing the efforts to eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons on the exercise of more stringent controls at the source — the manufacturers and suppliers. The countries with the greatest problem with respect to the illicit trade are also the least developed countries, with

very limited human and material capacity to mount effective controls on the illicit trade. As Rwanda endeavours to implement the Programme of Action, we appeal to the international community to provide more support to enable us to enhance our capacity to fight the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. There is need for greater support to establish and empower national coordinating agencies and focal points, particularly through manpower training.

Finally, my delegation would like to place on record its wholehearted support for draft resolution A/C.1/58/L.1, introduced today by South Africa. The draft resolution is in line with the common African position enshrined in the Bamako and Nairobi Declarations. We therefore look forward to its adoption and to convening a conference to review the progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action in 2006.

Mr. Poukré-Kono (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): Since this is the first time that my delegation is speaking, I should like to sincerely congratulate you, Sir, upon your election to serve as Chairman of the First Committee. I wish you much success. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

I am speaking to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/58/L.54, entitled "Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa". I have the honour to introduce this text on behalf of the members of the Standing Advisory Committee: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, and São Tomé and Príncipe.

As you know, the region of Central Africa, which has experienced conflicts of all types over these past years, is beginning to recover through the use of confidence-building measures that Member States have been able to develop in their relations. Thanks to mechanisms put in place, a region abounding in human and material potential that seeks recovery can take the opportunity to break away from egocentric and isolationist models. By regrouping and development, the subregion can ensure its recovery, but such development cannot occur without peace. Peace and

development are the fundamental elements for the consolidation of relations of good-neighbourliness.

The establishment in 1992 of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, whose activities are described in detail in the report of the Secretary-General, consolidates this approach, even if the prevention of conflicts remains a leitmotif in our discussions. The regular meetings of the Advisory Committee take up specific, topical items, as they did in Brazzaville from 12 to 14 May 2003, at a seminar on the implementation in the Central African Region 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. The meetings also follow up on the Programme of Action adopted at a ministerial meeting. The twentieth ministerial meeting of the Committee, which will be held from 27 to 31 October 2003 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, will officially launch the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX), which will endorse and reinforce measures that have already been taken at the regional level.

Indeed, we have to contribute to stabilizing the region by taking concrete disarmament measures to maintain peace, to promote sustainable development, to respect human rights, and to continue the fight against HIV-AIDS. The text of the draft resolution that has been submitted for the Committee's consideration has not been changed in substance from last year's resolution. I would like to reiterate the wish of the members of the Advisory Committee to see the draft resolution adopted by consensus as in previous years, so that the activities of the secretariat of the Committee could be encouraged and supported as a whole.

On behalf of the States members of the Advisory Committee, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for having sent an inter-agency mission to Central Africa, the report for which will further detail and support the needs that they have put forward by the States of Central Africa.

Mr. Shaw (Australia): Australia is strongly committed to addressing the problems posed by the proliferation and excessive accumulation of conventional weapons. Australia fully endorses and associates itself with the statement on small arms delivered by New Zealand on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum. Australia has been working closely with regional partners to address the challenges of small

arms proliferation in the Pacific. To this end, we assisted in the development of model legislation on weapons controls, adopted by the Pacific Island Forum in August this year.

We commend Ambassador Inoguchi on her successful chairing of the United Nations Biennial Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The Conference provided a useful opportunity to reflect on progress in implementing the United Nations Programme of Action and to build on cumulative efforts to enhance cooperation to combat the illicit trade in small arms. Australia welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on the feasibility of developing an international instrument to mark and trace small arms and light weapons, and we are again pleased to be able to sponsor the First Committee draft resolution on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, document A/C.1/58/L.1, as prepared and tabled by the delegations of Colombia, Japan and South Africa.

Australia welcomes progress achieved to date and urges States parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons to adopt a legally binding instrument on explosive remnants of war at the next meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts in November. The current draft framework paper developed by Ambassador Sanders provides a sound basis for consensus on a legally binding instrument.

Australia supports the fifteen-nation proposal on mines other than antipersonnel mines, and we urge States to take the next step in addressing the humanitarian impact of such mines and agree to a negotiating a mandate on a legally binding instrument.

We are again pleased to co-sponsor the First Committee resolution on the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) contained in document A/C.1/58/L.50.

Finally, Australia urges all States to submit annual returns to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. Transparency in armaments is a crucial element of efforts to enhance confidence and security at regional and international levels. Australia welcomes the expansion of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms to include man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS) and artillery between 75 and 100 mm, changes that increase the Register's relevance to current security concerns. We are again

pleased to co-sponsor the resolution on transparency in armaments contained in document A/C.1/58/L.45.

Ms. Rivero (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): The member States of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and its associated States, Bolivia and Chile, in whose name my delegation is speaking, wish to address two issues to which they attach great relevance, that is to say, the Ottawa Convention on Landmines and the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons.

With regard to the first issue, anti-personnel landmines, MERCOSUR and its associated countries are part of a continent that has suffered and continues to suffer the devastating and permanent consequences of the existence of antipersonnel mines. This experience on our continent has led us to give our full support, within in the Organization of American States (OAS), to the declaration of the western hemisphere as a zone free of such weapons. We did this even before having joined our voices with those who had previously subscribed to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, which our six countries have ratified.

In addition, and in a further demonstration of political will, the heads of State of MERCOSUR and the associated States declared our subregion a zone of peace, free of weapons of mass destruction, and adopted measures that ensured, amongst others, the total elimination of anti-personnel mines.

Within these international, regional and subregional frameworks, the member and associated countries of MERCOSUR have begun to implement, through their national legislation, a series of legal harmonization measures enabling our countries to comply with the instruments and decisions adopted amongst the six countries, with a special emphasis on the destruction of those arsenals that are under their respective jurisdictions.

Such actions, which stem from the need to eliminate the danger posed by weapons whose effects continue on after the very conflicts that occasioned their use, would mean that our region would have the authority to ensure that all States that have as yet not done so would adhere to the Ottawa Convention, particularly those States where the largest weapons manufacturing is concentrated.

Such weapons affect more than fifty States; but we must not see this as just another statistic. When speaking of affected States, we are speaking of men, women and children who are the victims of these weapons. We are speaking of large portions of land that still cannot be used for agriculture or any other activity that serves to feed a population. We are speaking of obstacles to development. For our countries, these problems are a priority.

The humanitarian aspects of this issue are also priorities: the fact that there are hundreds of thousands of victims that must live with the consequences of these weapons reaffirms the importance of continuing our call for the strengthening of all efforts towards cooperation, from mine-clearance activity, in which some of our countries participate within the framework of United Nations peacekeeping operations, to improving security for development. In this regard, we welcome activities that involve the donor countries in particular.

The Fifth Meeting of States Parties, recently held in Thailand, bore witness to the level of activity in this area, the affected populations' increased participation in programmes and workshops, and the higher level of resources allocated to expand the range of activities and to destroy stockpiled antipersonnel mines. In this connection, we would like to highlight the destruction of such weapons undertaken by our countries during the past year. But while encouraging, these activities still do not suffice, since as long as the community remains unable to eradicate these weapons entirely, the danger persists.

MERCOSUR member and associated States, committed to the right to a safe life and engaging their experience and possibilities, are confident that the number of States parties to the Ottawa Convention will continue to grow and that, at the same time, an increasing number of countries will actively cooperate in this endeavour.

With regard to the second issue, all of us have implemented a series of initiatives, such as the Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on the Illicit Traffic of Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in 2001. Details regarding the implementation of the Programme of Action were decided at the first Biennial Meeting in July this year. The wish to express our opinion collectively attests to our desire to emphasize again

that this problem cannot be resolved separately by any State as a domestic problem. It requires coordinated efforts at borders and at the subregional, regional and global levels.

Without this approach to guide our way, eradicating the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons, which currently takes half a million lives each year, will remain unrealizable. An example of this approach was the valuable exchange of information and experience that occurred at the first Biennial Meeting, where it was possible to observe that, even though the majority of countries have already started implementing some initiatives, the statistics on the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons remain alarming.

Above and beyond the individual experience that our countries have acquired in updating legislation, adopting new measures or rules, seizing and destroying weapons and strengthening border controls and other types of activities that constitute the first steps necessary for combating this trafficking, the initiatives taken at the subregional level have all been relatively successful. This is demonstrated in the high degree of agreement among the national legislations and border regulations of MERCOSUR and associated countries.

This common legal ground in various areas has made a working group on firearms and ammunitions possible, which has held several meetings evaluating the following: the need to include in national legislation legal aspects mentioned in the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials; a single form to standardize information on the movement of arms and their further monitoring; a draft convention to frame an agreement on the free-flowing transfer of information on the arms registry; and the possible use of the Interpol database of the international system for tracing firearms and explosives.

The network of non-governmental organization (NGOs) created two years ago should also be highlighted. It has become a useful tool for public awareness-raising regarding the dangers of such weapons and their illegal use. In particular, the network has attempted to reverse the so-called "perception of violence", the main characteristics of which include the distorted view of the relationship between crime, insecurity, legitimacy and the acquisition of weapons.

At the same time, all such activities undertaken within MERCOSUR and its associated States are designed to supplement the pioneering activities carried out by our countries, in the context of the Organization of American States, with the adoption of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials. That was a demonstration of political will to make room for cooperation in an area vital to the strengthening of individual initiative. As a result, and through agreements established with the United Nations, we have been able to plan or undertake technical assistance and cooperation activities aimed at disseminating information, as well as training and consciousness-raising.

However, despite national, subregional and regional initiatives, the links between terrorism or drug trafficking and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons put the latter in a category that obviously can be fought effectively only through an approach of global cooperation. Such cooperation should have ample resources and spheres of action commensurate with the gravity of the problem.

MERCOSUR's States members and associated States have already committed themselves to continuing to fight this problem in their subregional sphere. But, as we said at the beginning of this statement, if we do not coordinate global activities, there will be no improvement. For example, our countries believe that all activities aimed at tracing arms, identifying illicit trade routes and intermediaries, and locating supply paths are elements that, undertaken at the global level, can begin to correct the current situation. When we say "at the global level", we are referring to State and non-State actors, international and non-governmental organizations and civil society. We believe that the only way to effect change is with everyone's participation, without exception or exclusion.

Ms. Ryan (Norway): Certain conventional weapons have been described as weapons of mass destruction in slow motion. Each year, they are responsible for millions of deaths and injuries. Anti-personnel mines, unexploded ordnance and the proliferation of illicit small arms pose a challenge to human security — a challenge that must be dealt with in multilateral forums.

We must work to strengthen the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons with a new, legally binding protocol on explosive remnants of war. It is to be hoped that the next meeting of the Working Group on Explosive Remnants of War will lead to consensus on a new instrument that will make a real difference and enhance protection of people on the ground.

It is also time to start negotiating on a new protocol dealing with the humanitarian challenges posed by anti-vehicle mines. We are pleased to be a sponsor of the draft resolution on certain conventional weapons, introduced today by the representative of Sweden, and hope that it can be adopted without a vote.

In addition, we need to implement and further enforce the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, which is a most urgent and important task. Norway has supported the efforts to establish a new instrument on tracing and marking. Last year, Norway welcomed the French-Swiss initiative; we believe that it provides a number of excellent contributions to the upcoming negotiations on a new instrument.

We have also devoted considerable resources to combating the illicit brokering of small arms. Norway and the Netherlands organized an international conference in April on how to combat such illicit brokering; its results were reported back to the first biennial meeting in New York this past summer. The two Governments are now taking the issue forward under the Dutch-Norwegian initiative on illicit brokering. The main issue here is that only about 20 countries worldwide have legislation that regulates the brokering of small arms. We think that regional organizations should play a crucial role in helping to establish such legislation and in the international cooperation necessary to implement it. We therefore strongly support the resolution proposed by South Africa, Japan and Colombia — particularly the substance of paragraph 10 of that draft resolution.

All three draft resolutions on small arms that are before the Committee enjoy our sponsorship and strong support. However, we would invite the main sponsors to consider whether, in future years, a single resolution might be appropriate for this issue.

Ms. Martinic (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation fully aligns itself with the statement just made by the representative of Uruguay, on behalf of

MERCOSUR and its associated States. However, we should like to take this opportunity of interactive dialogue to share with the Committee information on the progress we have made in implementing the Ottawa Convention and in the area of small weapons.

As far as the Ottawa Convention is concerned, Argentina began to destroy its existing stocks of anti-personnel mines this month, with the final ceremony planned for 4 December 2003. The draft resolution on the transparency measures envisaged in the Convention will be implemented under the cooperation and technical assistance agreement signed by the Government of the Argentine Republic and the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States. The agreement was made possible by Canada's financial assistance, and we should like to take this opportunity to thank that country once again.

With regard to small arms and light weapons, a forum entitled "Weapons and a plan of action", was held in Buenos Aires from 30 September to 1 October. It was organized by the Government, with the participation and assistance of non-governmental organizations. The objective of the forum was to analyse the nature of the problem of the illicit trade in weapons; its monitoring; normative aspects of the issue; and questions of supply, demand and transfer, with a view to developing a national plan of action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in firearms. We should indicate that the forum represented the first meeting of representatives from nearly all provincial jurisdictions and Government agencies involved in the issue to design a plan of action aimed at implementing a comprehensive firearms monitoring policy in the country. Among the most relevant activities, emphasis was placed on revising our criminal code, the management of weapons depots, the destruction of decommissioned weapons, the creation of a national registry of decommissioned weapons, as well as the preparation of disarmament campaigns and strengthening monitoring systems.

Mr. Bar (Israel): I would like to make a general statement outlining Israel's position with regard to conventional arms. The First Committee has the task of contributing to international security and arms control. In this regard conventional arms control deserves particular attention by the international community in view of the growing amount of casualties and human suffering caused by misuse and indiscriminate use of conventional weapons.

The history of warfare is one in which tremendous civilian casualties have resulted solely from the use of conventional weapons. Conventional weapons in the hands of terrorists or countries that support terrorists can have a clear strategic impact. It is this history that offers us several important lessons with regard to conventional arms and armaments.

First, armaments in and of themselves do not pose threats: as was aptly stated many years ago "A sword never kills anybody; it is a tool in the killer's hand". The poisonous combination of extensive armaments and hostile intentions is what poses a genuine strategic threat. Israel therefore believes that the best antidote to the threat of armaments is the creation of an environment of confidence and trust.

Secondly, States must bear in mind that the need for armaments is in most cases a direct response to a given situation in which States are compelled to defend and secure their territory. Building trust and confidence in a region will necessarily reduce the need for armaments. When nations live together in a spirit of peace and good neighbourliness, it will be possible to reduce armaments and to increase transparency.

At the same time it is important that arms be controlled and the restraint be instituted so as to create the proper balance between legitimate security needs and the desire to prevent the unnecessary human suffering and loss of innocent life that result from irresponsible policies with respect to conventional arms proliferation. It is for this reason that my Government views the irresponsible use and transfer of conventional arms as a serious threat to regional and global security and stability. The spread of these weapons, or worse their acquisition by terrorists or criminal elements, invariably results in the loss of innocent life. Israel believes that the humanitarian dimension of this problem must remain foremost in our minds and serve to guide our deliberations on this matter.

Israel also believes that the best way to curb illicit arms proliferation throughout the world is through strong national commitment and determination. It is our view that States bear the primary responsibility for ensuring that no weapons are transferred from their territory without proper oversight. States must undertake marking and recording procedures for all weapons, stringent export controls, securing stockpiles and appropriate national

legislation to prevent the misuse and proliferation of arms.

One important way to reduce tensions is through confidence-building measures. These are measures that are mutually agreed upon and whose objective is to enhance a State's sense of security and reduce tensions. In considering such steps, however, we must bear in mind the specific nature of the conflicts, circumstances and threats in different regions. Some measures that are applicable in certain regions and can contribute to stability can have the opposite effect in other regions and could result in a reckless arms race.

In this context it should be noted that confidence-building measures are a means to achieve peace and security. They cannot be considered a reward, as they are an essential element in the embarkation on a process leading to an environment of trust, confidence and peace.

Transparency in armaments can serve as a useful instrument for reducing tensions. We believe that, in principle, the success of transparency is contingent upon the normalization of political and military relations among regional States. Israel is convinced that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is an important instrument and its contribution to regional and global stability and security is without doubt.

Since the inception of the Register, Israel has responded annually with information concerning the seven categories of major battle weapons. We have done so, despite the fact that our region has suffered continuing threats and lack of basic trust between nations. Israel decided to act this way for the purpose of building confidence and reducing the humanitarian impact of the use of conventional arms. We are encouraged by the valid conclusions reached by the Group of Experts regarding the Register, and particularly by the inclusion of man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS) in this instrument. We hope that this will contribute to better control and restraint on the transfer of this type of weapon.

Unfortunately, there has been no significant development in the Middle East region with regard to wider participation of States in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms or the beginning of a dialogue on regional transparency mechanisms.

Israel supports a gradual transparency process in military affairs, which must begin with regional responses, on a year-by-year basis, to the present United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and then evolve into advanced transparency. Advanced transparency that would encompass military holdings and domestic production capabilities, force projection and force multipliers, as well as advanced hi-tech military technology, can only prove stabilizing, if established as part of a regional security and arms control regime, taking into account national, regional and global security concerns. These should be based on mutually respected principles of reciprocity, comprehensiveness, openness and normalization in political and military relations. We hope that other countries will join us in participating in this instrument with a view towards its universal application.

Illicit proliferation and use of small arms and light weapons has affected many societies worldwide, causing suffering primarily to civilian populations, who must pay a high price. This phenomenon exacerbates internal conflicts, thereby increasing human suffering and threatening peace and security. Not only does it generate humanitarian problems but it also has a considerable impact upon all levels of society, be it economic or social. We therefore view the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms as timely and important.

Over the years, the international debate and initiatives related to small arms and light weapons have raised public awareness of the humanitarian problems caused by these weapons. This debate has also helped define and clarify different aspects of the issue.

Israel believes that small arms and light weapons must be controlled and restraints instituted, but in a way that takes into account legitimate security needs and at the same time preventing unnecessary human suffering and the loss of innocent life. We are certain that for many States the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms is not merely another theoretical exercise but rather a daily practice.

Israel shares the concern of the international community for the humanitarian cost of the irresponsible use and transfer of small arms and light weapons and has taken steps to curb their proliferation. Israel actively participated in the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and calls on all States

to implement the provisions of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms. Israel warmly welcomes the Programme of Action in the sincere hope that it will contribute to human security and peace. We would like to add our name to the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/58/L.47, which promotes the implementation of the Programme of Action on a regional level.

Israeli civilians have been particularly vulnerable to the effects of the illicit transfer and use of small arms and light weapons. The terrorist attack in Mombasa, Kenya at the end of November 2002, where anti-aircraft missiles were fired at an Israeli civilian aircraft carrying more than a hundred passengers, highlights the problem of man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS) falling into the wrong hands, especially those of terrorists. There must be safeguards to ensure that these weapons are not supplied to clients that may transfer them to terrorists. For Israel, as well as for other States in our region and the international community, the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action has become even more relevant.

It is precisely the failure of some of our neighbours to control the flow of arms to and from the territory under their control and collect illegal arms from terrorist groups, that constitutes the major obstacle to implementation of the road map back to peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

The continuation of the smuggling of arms, the extensive circulation of illicit small arms and light weapons and the extensive clandestine production of explosives and rockets have a devastating effect on our region and obliges Israel to take the necessary measures to protect itself and makes progress in the peace process impossible. Firm determination should be demonstrated by all in this regard. What is the contribution of the international community if we turn a blind eye to the continuation of illegal arms trafficking to terrorist groups?

Israel attaches particular importance to action aimed at preventing and minimizing the human suffering resulting from the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. Israel believes that an integral component in the effort to address this threat is cooperation. Cooperative initiatives in the areas of mine clearance, mine awareness and victim rehabilitation are of tremendous importance and

contribute greatly to efforts aimed at alleviating the humanitarian problems associated with landmines.

Israel has taken a number of unilateral steps as well, including ceasing all production of anti-personnel landmines, declaring a moratorium on the export of all types of anti-personnel mines and ratifying the amended Protocol II annexed to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). Israel hopes that other nations in the region will join with it in establishing cooperative mechanisms aimed at reducing that threat, preferably within the context of a comprehensive regional peace.

As a High Contracting Party to the CCW, we see the Convention as a good example of how States can act to restrain the use of arms while not causing harm to their vital national security interests. Israel is participating in the current negotiations on an international instrument on explosive remnants of war with a view to reducing their humanitarian effects in post-conflict situations. Israel can contribute to this joint endeavour towards finding the proper balance between the legitimate security needs of States and our moral imperative to reduce human suffering.

Although Israel shares the humanitarian objectives of the Ottawa Convention, due to regional circumstances and the continued threat of terrorism, it cannot commit itself to a total ban on the use of anti-personnel landmines. We have, however, taken part in several international initiatives aimed at promoting mine awareness and support for victims of these terrible weapons.

Finally, it is our common objective to achieve peace and security and we all hope to come to an era where "they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks". This vision unfortunately, is yet to be achieved by those who seek to live in peace and security as it is underscored by the growing threat of terrorism. The loss of innocent life is always painful. Terrorism does not distinguish among its victims. All of us are threatened by this phenomenon and all of us have a responsibility to stop it. We repeat our call to our neighbours and other States to cease all support for the perpetrators of such crimes, including supplying them with weapons and explosives. Terrorism, after all, is only viable if countries allow, and even support its fortification through weapons transfers.

We therefore hope that the international community will consolidate its efforts towards ensuring the compliance of States with their international obligations. The fundamental commitment of States to resolve disputes peacefully, to cease support for terrorism, and to live peacefully within secure boundaries can lay the foundation for future disarmament of conventional arms.

Mr. Durrani (Pakistan): On behalf of the delegations of Bangladesh, Egypt, Jordan, Nepal, Nigeria, Peru, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Turkey and my own delegation, I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/58/L.9, entitled "Regional disarmament".

International security and disarmament need to be pursued both at the international and regional levels. While international disarmament measures are vital, in most instances security and disarmament can be most effectively promoted at the regional level.

The draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/58/L.9 notes that the guidelines and recommendations for regional approaches to disarmament within the context of global security were adopted by the United Nations Disarmament Commission in 1993. Those guidelines remain relevant in the present day to promote regional disarmament in the conventional and non-conventional fields.

It is now evident that in most of the areas of tension and potential conflict, including the Middle East, South Asia, North-East Asia and Central Asia, the regional approach could offer a most effective basis to promote disarmament and enhance security.

The draft resolution notes the recent proposals for disarmament at the regional and subregional levels and expresses the conviction that endeavours to promote regional disarmament, taking into account the specific characteristics of each region, and in accordance with the principle of undiminished security at the lowest level of armaments, enhances the security of all States.

The draft resolution therefore stresses the need for sustained efforts, affirms that regional approaches to disarmament complement each other and calls on States to conclude agreements wherever possible. It welcomes initiatives towards disarmament, non-proliferation and security undertaken by some countries at the regional and subregional levels and

supports and encourages confidence-building measures.

Adoption of this draft resolution will encourage the concerned countries to pursue endeavours for regional disarmament and will help to strengthen regional and international security. The sponsors hope that, as was done last year, the draft resolution on regional disarmament will be adopted without a vote.

I would also like to briefly introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/58/L.10, entitled "Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels", on behalf of the delegations of Bangladesh, Germany, Nepal, Peru, Spain, the Netherlands and my own delegation.

This draft resolution aims to promote disarmament endeavours in an area which so far has not received due recognition in international disarmament forums — the pursuit of conventional disarmament at the regional and subregional levels. The draft resolution outlines in its preamble several vital principles and precepts relating to the issue. These include the points that the crucial role of arms control in peace and security, threats to peace in the post-cold war era arise mainly among States located in the same region, or subregion; that the preservation of a balance in the defence capabilities of States at the lowest level of armaments would contribute to peace and stability; that agreements to strengthen peace and security at the lowest possible level of disarmament and military forces is a desirable objective; that militarily significant States and States with larger military capabilities have a special responsibility in promoting such agreements for regional peace and security; and that an important objective should be to prevent the possibility of military attack launched by surprise, and to avoid aggression.

The preamble of the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/68/L.10 also notes with particular interest the initiatives in various regions, including in a number of Latin American countries, and the proposals for conventional arms control in South Asia. It recognizes the relevance and value of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, which is described as a cornerstone of European security.

The operative part of the draft resolution decides to give urgent consideration to the issue of conventional disarmament at the regional and subregional levels and requests the Conference on

Disarmament to consider formulating principles that can serve as a framework for regional agreements. It also request the Secretary-General to seek the views of the Member States and to submit a report to the next session of the General Assembly.

The sponsors express the hope that the draft resolution will be adopted without objection.

Mr. Šerkšnys (Lithuania): At the outset, let me congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Committee. I can assure you of our full support and cooperation. As in previous years, Lithuania is a sponsor of the draft resolutions on the Convention on the Prohibition or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons and on the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel mines and on their Destruction.

Allow me briefly to address issues under agenda items 73 (v) and 77. The Ottawa Convention and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) are an essential part of international humanitarian law, and Lithuania attaches great importance to it. We are concerned by the serious humanitarian impact of explosive remnants of war since acute problems arising from explosive remnants of war contamination have not been limited to zones of recent conflicts. The problem is much wider and exists in areas of conflicts fought long ago. If the issue of residual explosive remnants of war is to be solved, there needs to be an international legal norm and an effective framework mechanism for assistance and the exchange of information and technologies. We urge the elaboration of legally binding protocols for both explosive remnants of war and landmines other than anti-personnel mines, as well as a mechanism for verification of compliance covering the entire CCW.

Promoting the universality of the CCW, along with its additional protocols, should be high on the international agenda. Last February, Lithuania ratified the amendment to article 1 of the CCW and we call on other countries do likewise. Concerned at the severe impact on civil society caused by anti-personnel landmines and unexploded remnants of war throughout the world, Lithuania strongly supports international mine action and the strengthening of the international legal framework to mitigate the consequences of war and civil conflicts.

In light of that, Lithuania views the work being done in the framework of the Ottawa Convention and the CCW. Earlier this year, Lithuania was one of the first of its region to ratify the Ottawa Convention. Yet, even prior to our ratification, we had committed ourselves to fully implementing all provisions of the treaty. Its agreement relative to article 7 on transparency measures, has been submitted on a voluntary basis. We note with particular satisfaction that the number of States parties to the Ottawa Convention is increasing and that many of the recent ratifications have come from our region.

In the lead-up to the Convention's first review conference, in 2004, we feel it is increasingly important to seek various ways in which to contribute to the universalization, effective implementation of and compliance with the Treaty and to contribute to its core humanitarian aims. Making full use of the regional potential in this field and setting the stage for regional cooperation may require finding common ground among the different perceptions and experiences by means of confidence-building and transparency measures. Thus, next year, Lithuania plans to host a regional seminar, which we believe will be an important contribution to pursuing the goals of the Ottawa Convention.

Mr. Varma (India): We wish to speak in support of the draft resolution contained in A/C.1/58/L.1, entitled "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects".

As we indicated in our previous statements, we remain committed to an active, constructive engagement for the timely implementation of the programme of action to address the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Ambassador Rakesh Sood of India chaired the Group of Governmental Experts established pursuant to resolution 56/24 V, which recommended a decision to negotiate under the aegis of the United Nations an international instrument to enable States to identify and trace in a timely manner small arms and light weapons. We expressed the hope that during our deliberations no effort would be spared to maintain the momentum generated by the substantive consensus reflected in the work of the Group.

We would like to avail ourselves of this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to all those delegations which have specifically mentioned in

their statements or have made known their positions in support of the role played by India, in particular by Ambassador Sood. Many delegations noted his great diplomatic skill in guiding the work of the Group to achieve the substantive consensus that was finally brought about. We believe that we should build on that substantive consensus, including through the establishment of the Working Group, which will hold its organizational session in New York in February next year. This is indeed an important step in carrying forward the process.

Given the positive response and support that has been extended to the role played by India, we in turn are prepared to express our readiness to continue to contribute to those efforts in the same manner as we did with respect to the Working Group established pursuant to resolution 56/24 V.

The Chairman: The Committee has been proceeding rather smoothly so far with the second phase of its work. Consequently, it is my intention — subject to the consent of the Committee — to cancel the meeting scheduled for the afternoon of Friday, 24 October, and to release the facilities allocated to the Committee for other purposes. Tomorrow, we will discuss all the items scheduled for Friday.

May I take it that, in the absence of objection, the Committee wishes to proceed accordingly?

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I now give the floor to the Secretary of the Committee to make an announcement.

Mr. Sattar (Secretary of the Committee): I would like to inform the Committee that the following countries have joined as sponsors of the following draft resolutions — A/C.1/58/L.1: Austria, Bolivia, Grenada, Latvia, Mongolia and the Republic of Moldova; A/C.1/58/L.9: Turkey; A/C.1/58/L.10: Italy; A/C.1/58/L.11, L.12, L.13, L.19, L.26 and L.27: the Republic of the Congo; A/C.1/58/L.16: Ukraine; A/C.1/58/L.17, L.32 and L.50: the Republic of Moldova; A/C.1/58/L.21: Fiji, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea; L.31: Ghana; A/C.1/58/L.35: Armenia and Myanmar; A/C.1/58/L.36: Myanmar; A/C.1/58/L.38: Thailand; A/C.1/58/L.39: Paraguay; A/C.1/58/L.40: Austria, Costa Rica and Paraguay; A/C.1/58/L.42: Austria; A/C.1/58/L.43: Albania, Belize, Cape Verde, Chad, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; A/C.1/58/L.45: Ghana, Thailand and the Republic of Moldova; A/C.1/58/L.46: Norway, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, San Marino and Ukraine; A/C.1/58/L.51: Spain; A/C.1/58/L.52: Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Tuvalu and Vanuatu; and A/C.1/58/L.53 Tuvalu.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.