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First Committee

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Official Records

Chairman: Mr. Sareva (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 62 to 80 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

Mr. Caughley (New Zealand): It is a pleasure to see you, Sir, leading the work of the First Committee. We especially appreciate your diligent consultation in preparing for this year's session, and are confident that, under your leadership, this Committee can make a difference. Indeed, the current state of the world demands no less.

We fully associate ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Brazil on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition. The New Agenda's goal of a world free of nuclear weapons has been and continues to be a key objective of the New Zealand Government. The verifiable and irreversible destruction of all nuclear weapons is more vital than ever in the current international security environment.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was predicated on the agreement that the non-nuclear-weapon States gave up the option of ever possessing nuclear weapons, while the five nuclear-weapon States entered into obligations to undertake effective measures towards nuclear disarmament. That commitment has since been reinforced by the unequivocal undertaking to achieve nuclear disarmament given by the nuclear-weapon States at the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

Within the NPT, non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament carry equal weight. One does not trump the other. The international community's current and justifiable concern about proliferation matters must not divert our attention from the bigger picture of a world where the norms against proliferation and for nuclear disarmament make common cause.

In this regard, there has never before been a more urgent need for the five nuclear-weapon States to deliver on their commitments under the NPT regime. The risk of non-State actors accessing nuclear weapons, the vast amounts of nuclear material worldwide that remain susceptible to theft and diversion, continuing nuclear instability in South Asia, North Korea's proclaimed nuclear-weapons programme and the possibility that others may follow are all factors that demonstrate that there is only one guarantee for a safe and peaceful world, and that is the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

The moral authority inherent in demanding that others must not develop nuclear-weapon capabilities relies on meaningful measures towards permanent nuclear disarmament by those States that possess them.

The international debate within the Security Council on weapons of mass destruction highlighted the importance of full and effective verification. Verification by an objective and independent body is crucial to building mutual trust and confidence among States. We call not only on those States under scrutiny to cooperate fully with the International Atomic Energy

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Agency (IAEA), but also on all other States to support its processes and to follow due process.

We call on North Korea to reverse its announced abandonment of the NPT. Development of nuclear weapons by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would destabilize the Korean peninsula and be a threat to regional security. We welcome the initiative to hold multilateral talks to address this concern. We hope that the process of dialogue will continue and that agreement can be reached that will result in the permanent abandonment by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of nuclear weapons and the renewal of energy and development assistance to North Korea, which could then follow. We particularly commend China for its constructive facilitating role in the dialogue process.

We remain gravely concerned by the continued retention of the nuclear-weapons option by those three States — India, Israel and Pakistan — that operate unsafeguarded nuclear facilities and have not acceded to the NPT. The international community must intensify its efforts to achieve universal adherence to the NPT and its accompanying verification regime, without conditions and without delay.

Given the scale and advanced state of Iran's nuclear activities, it is important that the IAEA be able to verify Iran's peaceful intentions. We call upon Iran to heed the strong message from the international community in the IAEA Board's resolution passed without dissent in September and to cooperate fully and urgently with the Agency. Iran must demonstrate complete transparency in the interest of confidence-building with the international community. It is vital that the Agency be allowed to complete its assessment in order to provide the independent assurances we need.

New Zealand remains concerned over the lack of effective international controls on biological weapons. Outbreaks resulting from the intentional or accidental release of biological agents and the rapidly evolving technology in particular in the area of biotechnology have brought renewed urgency to reinforce the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention this year embarked on a new process. That process was not New Zealand's preferred option for addressing the threat from biological weapons. We recognize, however, that agreement of all States parties is a central strength of

multilateral forums, and we believe that the meeting of experts process can agree on meaningful outcomes in the form of common understandings.

In spite of the deeply troubling events that have taken place over the last twelve months, there have been some positive movements. The First Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention, held in April and May of this year, demonstrated that that Convention is beginning to get into its stride. The Review Conference reinforced New Zealand's conviction that the Chemical Weapons Convention makes a vital and essential contribution to international peace and security. It demonstrated that multilateral disarmament conventions can — and must — evolve in order to confront new challenges. But equally, it demonstrated that maintaining the continuing effectiveness of the Convention requires much hard work. We must not think the job is done once a Convention enters into force. In the case of the Chemical Weapons Convention, we must take the opportunity offered to us by the Review Conference outcome to demonstrate that we are prepared to take the Convention forward and to reinforce its crucial role in the collective security architecture.

In particular, we welcome the developments this year in the Conference on Disarmament (CD), giving some hope that the Conference may be able to agree on a comprehensive programme of work. With respect to the Conference's programme of work, New Zealand regards a fissile material cut-off treaty as only one component of the broader programme required to achieve the complete prohibition of nuclear weapons, but an important one nonetheless.

We also welcome the Group of Eight's Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction as a practical and valuable contribution to international security.

New Zealand was pleased with the outcomes of the International Conference on Safety of Transport of Radioactive Material held in Vienna in early July this year, which recommended establishing a dialogue between shipping States and the relevant coastal States on communication between Governments and setting up a working group on liability. As the current chair of the 16-member Pacific Islands Forum, New Zealand is only too well aware of the impact that a shipping accident, even without release of radioactivity, would

have on the fragile tourism and fishing industries of our region.

In the area of conventional weapons, we continue to see real progress being made. Intergovernmental efforts have reaped the benefits of closer partnerships with civil society. The Ottawa Convention stands as an unprecedented success in the disarmament arena in recent times. This year we warmly welcomed the Kingdom of Thailand's hosting of the fifth Meeting of States Parties and bringing attention to the challenges that anti-personnel mines have posed in the Asian region. The partnership between States parties, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations has contributed to the now firmly established international norm against the use of anti-personnel mines. We look forward to working with partners in the lead-up to next year's Review Conference, not only to take stock of what has been achieved but also to strengthen the Convention's norms and objectives.

States parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) will arrive at a critical juncture in November, when we will see whether a legally binding instrument addressing the humanitarian impact of the explosive remnants of war and a mandate on anti-vehicle mines can be achieved. At that meeting, the credibility of the CCW forum will be on the line, as the dreadful death and injury toll wreaked by explosive remnants of war and anti-vehicle mines is well known and can be clearly seen in countries such as Angola, Afghanistan and Cambodia. The humanitarian issues at stake demand a legally binding instrument on explosive remnants of war, one that establishes a strong international norm on the clearance of such remnants and sets out measures to protect civilians.

This year at the first Biennial Meeting on Small Arms and the Programme of Action, States parties expressed a strong commitment to addressing the many complex problems surrounding small arms. While there remains much to be done before the next meeting in 2005, we are confident that further progress will be made.

Whatever the differences between us, as we look back on the disturbing events that have taken place since this Committee last met, we must surely all agree that there is an urgent need to move forward constructively. Even more important is that we move forward with a strengthened United Nations and with

the tools to confront the threats we face today. In that context, New Zealand strongly supports the efforts to reform and revitalize the United Nations, in particular the First Committee, to make it effective and ensure that it can respond to the security concerns of its Member States.

Finally, despite the current challenges working against progress towards peace and disarmament, we need to remember that individuals still have power to bring about change in their immediate environment. The United Nations Disarmament Study published last year provided a timely reminder of the vital importance of peace education. New Zealand fully supports the findings of the expert panel. One of our best hopes for a peaceful future is to encourage young people to develop non-confrontational ways of dealing with conflict, starting in their immediate surroundings and extending out to the wider community. By incorporating peace education programmes into all levels of society, we can reflect our joint goal of working towards a more secure and stable future. States parties, international organizations and civil society must work together to make this aspiration a reality.

Mr. Assaf (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman — and the other members of the Bureau — on your election to the chairmanship of our Committee. We will cooperate fully with you to ensure the success of the work of this session. I would also like to congratulate Mr. Abe, the new Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, on his appointment to his new position.

The preamble of the Charter of the United Nations calls upon us to commit ourselves to protecting future generations from the scourge of war. Weapons continue to be the main tool of war. Article 11 of the Charter deals with the principles of international peace and security and the first resolution adopted by the General Assembly in 1946 dealt with disarmament. Nevertheless, events over recent years have demonstrated that disarmament is not going in the right direction; on the contrary, military expenditure has increased, weapons stockpiles are growing and there are more wars. A number of doctrines have appeared that would allow war to be declared, and terrorists have obtained more weapons and have led attacks in various parts of the world.

The position of Lebanon with respect to disarmament can be summarized as follows.

First, multilateralism represents an essential principle in the area of disarmament negotiations. The United Nations, as an international Organization more universal than any other, must take collective measures to prevent any threat to international peace and security. The problem of weapons stockpiling has had an impact on all States of the world, and all States therefore have the right to express their opinion on this problem. We do not wish to minimize the importance and usefulness of bilateral talks; they complement multilateral negotiations, but they do not replace them.

Secondly, the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Middle East represents a serious threat to international peace and security in the region. Our Committee, each year, adopts two resolutions on the threat of nuclear weapons and on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Israel is the only country in the region that has still not acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The universality of that treaty requires that all States accede to it.

Thirdly, small arms and light weapons fuel most wars and conflicts because of the ease of their use and the ease of access to those weapons. The spread and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons represent a threat to civilians and to the national security of States and also represents an obstacle to development. Effective elimination of the scourge of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons requires that we deal with the sources and causes of conflicts — namely, foreign occupation.

Fourthly, there is a close relationship between disarmament and development. Indeed, in a world where one third of the population live on less than \$2 per day, it is tragic that weapons expenditure last year reached approximately \$850 billion. The Government of Lebanon has reduced its military expenditures as far as possible; they are now approximately zero. The budget of the Ministry of Defence is allocated only towards paying salaries and social welfare benefits to military personnel.

Fifthly, landmines constitute a genuine international humanitarian problem that affects 90 States. Landmines claim approximately 15,000 victims each year, most of whom are civilians. Landmines hinder development and prevent internally displaced

persons from returning home. Lebanon is a country affected by landmines because the Israeli occupation left behind 450,000 landmines. Thanks to the support of the United Nations and generous funding from the United Arab Emirates, the Government of Lebanon is carrying out demining activities.

Sixthly, in regard to transparency, controlling conventional and strategic weapons plays a critical role in consolidating international peace and security. Transparency is one of the means of weapons control and contributes to confidence-building among States. In conformity with the principle of transparency, Lebanon continues each year to provide the Secretary-General with reports on its military expenditure. In this context, we call for a broadening of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms to include weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons.

Finally, the grim situation with respect to disarmament should prompt us to undertake more efforts to achieve the objectives of our Committee. This means that States should demonstrate the political will to respect the Committee's resolutions for the maintenance of international peace and security. Words should be supported by action.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Mr. Chairman, may I congratulate you, my colleague in the General Committee, most warmly on your assumption of our Chair. I assure you of Bangladesh's fullest support in your challenging task of bringing our work to fruition.

2003 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. And yet we have little to celebrate. Everything that we had aspired to — a general and complete disarmament under effective international control — remains unrealized.

This year has also witnessed the failure of the United Nations Disarmament Commission to adopt a substantive report after four years of deliberations. No consensus could be achieved on the objectives and agenda of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. For the last seven years, the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, the sole multilateral forum for negotiations on disarmament, has remained deadlocked over its programme of work, blocking any substantive progress, particularly on nuclear disarmament and negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Where nuclear weapons exist, there will be a propensity for their use. Their continued existence poses a risk to humanity. The global nuclear non-proliferation regime based on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) faces unprecedented challenges to its credibility and its integrity. While the universality of the NPT and the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) remain unaccomplished, proliferation of nuclear-weapon States and of the weapons themselves continues to threaten multilateral efforts towards nuclear disarmament.

The world has witnessed most serious setbacks during the past year. New threats to international peace and security have come to the fore. In spite of an unyielding global determination to strengthen counter-terrorism measures, terrorism continues to pose a major threat to international peace and security. While lack of commitment by the nuclear-weapon States towards a complete elimination of their nuclear weapons remains a prime concern for non-nuclear-weapon States, the dangers of use of these weapons by terrorists and non-State actors loom even larger for all. Pre-emptive measures based on perceived national security threats have exposed humankind to yet another war. New security doctrines have emerged. Tensions in South Asia between nuclear neighbours continue to remain a legitimate source of concern.

Escalating global military expenditures seriously undermine implementation of the international development commitments to rid the world of conflict, widespread poverty, disease, deprivation and injustice any time soon.

It appears that disarmament has gone out of fashion. Many achievements that were recorded in the first half-century of the United Nations in this area have suffered tragic reversal in the new century. The Secretary-General, in his report on the work of the Organization, has expressed concern that "the body of multilateral disarmament norms has been slowly eroded as a result of weakened international commitment". There can be no "good" or "bad" proliferation, since any act of proliferation can lead to greater instability in the future. These comments truly reflect the sad state of affairs in the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation arena, which concerns us profoundly. Last week's deliberations in this Committee have only reaffirmed such apprehensions and have not stilled our fears.

While disappointment remains high at the lack of progress in the various fields of multilateral disarmament, we should be remiss if we failed to accord due recognition to certain initiatives taken by the international community over the past year. These we hope will contribute greatly to confidence-building measures in the current global peace and security environment. Bangladesh welcomes the entry into force in June of this year of the Moscow Treaty between the Russian Federation and the United States. Even though this cannot compensate for the scrapping of the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems, it was an important development in nuclear disarmament in the context of transparency, verifiability and irreversibility. We welcome the important decisions of Cuba and Timor-Leste to join the NPT during the past year. These accessions would move the NPT one step forward to its much sought after universality. We call upon all States that have not yet done so to service humanity by following suit.

Among other positive developments was the progress made in July in the first biennial meeting to consider the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted by the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. It afforded us the opportunity to explore possible areas of international and regional cooperation, including partnership with civil society, to effectively implement the Programme of Action at national levels. Last year also marked the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. We feel encouraged at the increased participation by Member States in the Register, which contributes to greater transparency in armaments. Bangladesh contributes information to the Register on an annual basis.

We also welcome the successful conclusion in Bangkok last month of the Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention. The growing universal support for eradication of the scourge of landmines sets a unique example of how multilateralism can work when States and civil society cooperate. We remain hopeful that the expert-level work last August for a legal instrument within the framework of the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) to deal with explosive remnants of war will pave the way for further negotiations during the upcoming States Parties meeting next month. Bangladesh endorsed the political declaration adopted

at the First Review Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), reaffirming the international resolve for complete elimination of chemical weapons through effective verification. The launching of the Hague Code of Conduct was also a significant step forward in setting international norms to promote the non-proliferation of ballistic missiles.

Firm in our constitutional commitment, Bangladesh has been in the forefront of contributing to the goal of general and complete disarmament. Party to almost all disarmament-related treaties, including the NPT, CTBT, CWC, CCW, the Ottawa Convention on landmines, and the Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons Convention, Bangladesh attaches special importance to strict adherence and non-discriminatory enforcement and to the verification mechanisms of these treaties, which provide the best means of achieving their objectives. For us development is a priority. It is our strong conviction that the Millennium Development Goals can be best achieved against the matrix of disarmament, reduction in military expenditure, devotion of resources to poverty eradication and sustained confidence-building measures through international political cooperation.

Bangladesh, therefore, calls on all Member States of the United Nations, big and small, rich and poor, to seriously consider the growing negative trends in the area of disarmament. We urge them to re-energize their efforts to bring renewed vitality to achieve the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament. It should be pursued multilaterally and bilaterally, as well as unilaterally. It should be pursued globally and regionally, as well as domestically. To this end, my delegation will work closely with others to achieve, inter alia, the following priorities: Revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament to reaffirm its legitimacy and credibility as the sole negotiating forum for multilateral disarmament, including through demonstration of greater international political will to break the current impasse; renewal and revival of the international commitment towards multilateral disarmament, as was evinced in the success of the first special session on disarmament; universalization of the NPT and a strict and non-discriminatory enforcement and verification mechanism under the International Atomic Energy Agency; early fulfilment of obligations under Article VI of the NPT by the nuclear-weapon States; effective implementation of the 13-step Action Plan adopted at the 2000 NPT Review Conference;

strengthening efforts to ensure early entry into force of the CTBT, particularly calling upon those countries whose ratification is required in this regard; renewal of efforts to persuade those countries which have not yet done so to join the NPT — in South Asia, India and Pakistan must also relinquish their nuclear option and join the Treaty — placing of maximum emphasis on strengthening the enforcement, monitoring and verification regimes in respect of all international treaties relating to disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs); strengthening of international, regional and national safeguard measures to ensure that WMDs and related technology do not fall into the wrong hands — the best way to achieve this goal, however, lies in the total elimination of WMDs — promotion of regional disarmament arrangements by encouraging dialogue and providing continued support to strengthen regional disarmament centres — the Kathmandu process must be strengthened in contributing to regional peace and security in Asia and the Pacific, and the concept of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of agreements freely arrived at should be pursued in all earnest to cover more regions — renewed efforts to reverse the trend of increasing military expenditure, particularly by major military powers — part of the resources made available by implementing disarmament treaties must be devoted to economic and social development of the developing countries and the linkage between peace dividend and creation of a global fund for poverty alleviation should be seriously pursued in this context.

I wish to reiterate Bangladesh's unwavering commitment to actively strengthening disarmament through multilateralism in cooperation with all. We remain ready to work with others to revitalize the efficiency and working methodology of this universal forum under the guidance of the General Assembly. Any reform should, of course, represent the expressed concerns of the large segment of humanity. It should essentially aim for the realization of disarmament and non-proliferation commitments undertaken each year. We are an ardent promoter of a culture of peace and non-violence for our future generations in order to save them from the scourge of war.

We call upon those who can to do more to rid the world of weapons of all types. We must remind ourselves that the power of humanity does not lie in the size of its armies, or in the kill probability of its armaments, but rather in the strength of its ideas; not in

its ability to destroy, but in its capacity to build; not in its surrender to despondency, but in its faith and hope.

The Chairman: Before giving the floor to the next speaker I would again remind delegations to respect the statements being made. I know that in about 50 hours, the deadline for submission of draft resolutions will expire and that you are engaged in important bilateral and multilateral consultations to further that goal, but please, make sure that you will respect the statements and those who are making them, while you consult.

Mr. Own (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to extend to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the members of the Bureau, my warmest congratulations on your assumption of the chairmanship of this Committee. We are fully confident that your experience and wisdom will help us achieve our desired goals that will have a significant and positive impact on the promotion of disarmament and on enhancing international peace and security.

We also would like to express our thanks and appreciation to Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his statement before this Committee and the continuous efforts he has made to fulfil the tasks entrusted to him, pursuant to his mandate.

Today is the twenty-fifth anniversary of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, the first session devoted to disarmament, at which the Member States acknowledged, in the final document adopted by consensus, that nuclear weapons constitute the greatest danger to humanity and to the survival of civilization.

Adopting those same methods in order not to forget, we should continue to be reminded of them and to incorporate and implement them. Those methods are tremendously important because of the realistic and logical approach used to look at the priorities of disarmament in order to attain complete and full disarmament with respect to all forms of weapons including nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons. We must recognize the importance of such special sessions on disarmament, because of the results desired in terms of a collective international will, which will effectively contribute to promoting the efforts of the international community and to bringing about complete disarmament.

We call upon the international community to make every effort to hold the fourth special session devoted to disarmament as quickly as possible.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has been in effect since 1970. Six NPT review conferences have been held to assess progress in the area of non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. These were the goals that the majority of State parties to the treaty have aspired to — goals that are necessary in order to bring about a world free of nuclear weapons and the threat of such weapons. However, the results of the review conferences were disappointing. In fact, we are now threatened with a catastrophe that is difficult to predict and whose devastating effects will reach all members of the international community. The number of States that possess nuclear weapons has doubled; the number of nuclear warheads has increased and their destructive power has expanded beyond anybody's imagination, with the ability to destroy the planet Earth a thousand times over.

Therefore, the international community, and particularly those nuclear-weapon States, have a great responsibility in fulfilling the purposes and principles of the NPT through good will and serious negotiations that would lead to concluding irreversible bilateral and multilateral treaties on nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. Those States must implement the pledges they made in accordance with the NPT and in the final declarations of the review conferences of the NPT, including moving forward towards concluding a multilateral agreement that would create security safeguards for countries that do not possess nuclear weapons, and commitment to implement the subparagraphs of article 6 of the final document of the sixth review conference of the year 2000, and paragraph 4 (c) for 1995 concerning setting up a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Here we would like to emphasize the importance of making advances in reducing strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons, in terms of unilateral, bilateral and collective initiatives as an integral part of the process of reducing nuclear-weapon capacity. In addition, reducing nuclear-weapon capacity will bring about confidence and transparency among nuclear-weapons States and will advance the efforts towards putting an end to and preventing threats from the possession of such weapons.

The Conference on Disarmament should without delay establish an ad hoc committee to address the issue of nuclear disarmament and to establish, through negotiations a non-discriminatory and multilateral treaty which could be verified internationally and effectively, and to halt the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and all other nuclear devices.

It is very important for the international community and particularly the major States, to fulfil their responsibilities to put all forms of pressure on the Israelis to make them adhere, without delay, to the NPT and to submit all of their nuclear facilities to the full scope of the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), particularly since that is the only regime in the Middle East that suffers from the greatest degree of conflict and tension and yet still remains outside these obligations. According to reports from many sources, Israel possesses hundreds of nuclear weapons, with the means to fire them into any area in the Arab region as well as in Europe and Central Asia. Many mass media sources have pointed out this week that Israel is also developing submarines to fire these missiles from the sea. This shows the seriousness of Israel's stance which is deliberately being ignored by some major States.

It is very important to promote multilateralism in the area of disarmament pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/63 as multilateralism is the only way to bring about complete and full disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, and is the only way to bring about a settlement of all international problems through peaceful means.

My country has attached particular importance to all issues of disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, by acceding to and signing many relevant international treaties, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction; the 1925 Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare; the draft Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons; the safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency and other agreements on chemical and nuclear weapons. Moreover, we have participated actively in all international and regional disarmament conferences

on the basis of our firm conviction and full commitment to creating a world free from the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and all other forms of weapons of mass destruction; to directing international efforts towards achieving sustainable development; to putting an end to poverty and endemic diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria; to helping peoples who remain under the yoke of colonialism and occupation to determine their own future, attain their freedom, achieve their independence on all their national territory and put an end to all forms of injustice and oppression practised against them; and to eliminating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including State terrorism and organized terrorism, which has reached every corner of the world.

My country is facing many problems related to the presence of numerous mines and remnants of war. United Nations estimates indicate that no fewer than 10 million mines were buried in Libyan lands during the Second World War. That has proved to be a great obstacle in my country's efforts to achieve economic and human development and has caused the killing, disabling and injuring of innocent civilians — incidents that continue to occur to this day.

In that regard and through this forum, we appeal to all countries responsible for the planting of such mines in Libya to respond fully and immediately by providing my country with maps and information concerning all mines buried there — together with the technical and financial assistance required for demining — and paying compensation proportionate to the injuries that they have caused. Here, we should like to refer to the historic 1998 declaration between Libya and Italy, which included, among many other things, cooperation between those countries aimed at demining Libyan land. Furthermore, a memorandum of understanding was signed in 2001 to establish a mechanism to implement the declaration's provisions. I should also like to urge the two other countries concerned — the United Kingdom and Germany — to follow Italy's lead by signing similar agreements with Libya to provide the technical and financial assistance needed to demine Libyan land — thereby removing the danger — and to pay the necessary compensation to the Libyan people for the damage and suffering caused by mines.

Since 1981, the Committee has considered an item entitled "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region". My country

has long called for making that region a zone of security and peace where all our peoples can live in mutual respect and harmony, working together to make the Mediterranean Sea a sea of peace and communications, a bridge between continents and a crossroads for all cultures and civilizations. However, that will not be achieved unless all foreign military fleets in the area are withdrawn and all military bases that have no reason to exist in the region are closed, especially after the end of the cold war. We reaffirm the importance of respect for the sovereignty of all States in the region, of non-interference in their internal affairs and respect for their particularities, of the settlement of all disputes by peaceful means through dialogue, rather than the use or the threat of use of force, punitive measures or the threat of such measures, of ending foreign occupation and of respect of peoples' right to self-determination and independence. The Tripoli meeting of the 5+5 dialogue among the countries of the western Mediterranean, held in May 2002, and the summit that followed it in Tunisia, embody the spirit of cooperation and are important steps towards full cooperation among the region's countries to assist actively in promoting international peace and security in the Mediterranean basin.

Because of the importance that we attach to the work of the First Committee and the sensitivity of the matters that it considers — chief among which are disarmament and international peace and security — we wish to emphasize that any process of reforming the Committee should focus primarily on the importance of implementing the commitments and pledges undertaken by the Committee and contained in the successive and repeated resolutions of the past several decades. They remain unimplemented because of a lack of will among many members of the international community, particularly among some major States. As such resolutions are essential if the international community intends to avert many of the dangers that are steadily mounting — particularly the horizontal and vertical proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and other forms of weapons that threaten international peace and security — we believe that reform cannot be accomplished by stripping the Committee's agenda of its content or by failing to consider a number of resolutions that have not been implemented in past years. That could not be considered reform, but rather an end to the Committee's mandate and objectives and a marginalization of the general role of the United Nations in the area of disarmament and in promoting

international peace and security. Therefore, ideal Committee reform should be carried out in the context of a more comprehensive reform of the Organization's basic structures as a legitimate framework for guaranteeing balance in the Committee's work. That should be accomplished through the high-level panel to be established pursuant to the Secretary-General's proposal aimed at continuing the reform process, which could be expanded to include all other committees in order to strengthen their mandates and ensure fulfilment of their tasks rather than marginalizing or downsizing them.

Mr. Nguyen Duy Chien (Viet Nam): I should like to join other speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. I am confident that, with your wide-ranging expertise and diplomatic skills, you will guide the Committee's discussions to a positive outcome. I should also like to take this opportunity to welcome the appointment of the new Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, and to thank him for his presentation covering various issues related to disarmament and international security.

Our delegation associates itself with the statement to be made later by the representative of Myanmar on behalf of the member States of the Association of South-East Asian Nations. Therefore, we shall limit our remarks to the following points.

As a long-standing advocate of general and complete disarmament, my country believes that there is a solid foundation for further common action aimed at achieving that noble objective: it is a system of international commitments embodied in various multilateral instruments and institutions. We therefore strongly support all efforts to consolidate those commitments and to strengthen and further develop them as required by the agreed conclusions of the relevant conferences, meetings and resolutions of the General Assembly.

However, we note with regret that recent work in the field of disarmament and security has not brought the desired results. That is reflected in the lack of progress in the discussions of the Disarmament Commission on two important issues: ways and means to promote nuclear disarmament and confidence-building. There has been no consensus on the objectives or the agenda, including the possibility of establishing a preparatory committee for the convening

of the fourth special session on disarmament. The 2003 session of the Disarmament Commission continued to fail to find common agreement on the programme of work. In truth, some progress has been made, but the overall picture in disarmament affairs over the last year is quite far from satisfactory.

Firmly convinced that weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, are posing the most serious threat to the world today, we have consistently favoured their total elimination and reaffirm our strong commitment to closely cooperate with the international community to get rid of such dangerous weapons. In that context, we once again wish to stress the importance of the conclusion of the International Court of Justice in its Advisory Opinion on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons issued on 8 July 1996, which stated that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international controls.

We also value the role of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as the cornerstone of a global non-proliferation regime that provides collective security. Undoubtedly, all States parties must fully comply with the Treaty's obligations and implement the 13 steps contained in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference. It is our sincere hope that the 2005 Review Conference will make substantial progress.

Since nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament are substantially interrelated and mutually reinforcing, there is an urgent need for a systematic and progressive process of nuclear disarmament. Nuclear-weapon States are therefore required to implement the commitments undertaken at the 2000 Treaty Review Conference for the total elimination of their nuclear arsenal, leading to nuclear disarmament. In that connection, we welcome the ratification of the Moscow Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions by the United States and the Russian Federation last June.

We wish to reaffirm our strong support for the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly on disarmament in order to review the implementation of the first special session on disarmament, with the full participation of the United Nations Member States. We urge the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission to

renew efforts to overcome the deadlock and resume their substantive work as soon as possible. We welcome and support all efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions of the world, as the establishment of such zones is a practical step towards a world of peace.

In conclusion, we support the proposals expressed by many speakers on revitalizing the current work of the First Committee. We hope that through constructive work the First Committee will be able to make progress on promoting common understanding and agreeing on concrete and practical measures that strengthen the regime of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation.

Mr. Than (Myanmar): On behalf of the delegation of Myanmar, as well as on my own behalf, I should like to extend our warmest congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, on your unanimous election as Chairman of the First Committee of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. Our tribute also goes to the other members of the Bureau. I also wish to offer my personal felicitations and best wishes to Mr. Suriya Chindawongse, a promising young diplomat and a close friend from a fellow Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) country, on his election as a Vice-Chairman of this Committee. We will cooperate with you fully, Mr. Chairman, in your endeavours to advance the work of the First Committee.

I should also like to take this opportunity to offer our warmest congratulations to Mr. Nobuyasu Abe on his assumption of duties as the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. We are fully confident that he will be able to give strong and effective leadership to the Department for Disarmament Affairs in the challenging years ahead. We wish him every success in his future endeavours.

This year's session of the First Committee is taking place at a time of trials and tribulations for arms control and disarmament. We have been witnessing the weakening of international commitments. To our dismay, even the commitments reflected in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) have been put in question. The sole multilateral negotiating forum for arms control and disarmament is at a standstill. No substantive multilateral negotiations on an important disarmament issue are taking place at the moment.

This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the convening of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The provisions of the Final Document of the first special session on disarmament still remain valid. Paragraph 20 of the Final Document accords the highest priority to nuclear disarmament. We wish to reaffirm our position that nuclear disarmament is the highest priority for us.

It is important that the nuclear-weapon States honour their unequivocal undertaking to totally eliminate their nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament, a commitment made at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. It is therefore essential that the 13 steps set out in the Final Document of the Conference be implemented in a progressive and irreversible manner.

I should like to stress here the substantive link between nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. The two processes are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. They must go hand in hand, as only then shall we be able to maintain sustainable, balanced, coherent and effective regimes of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. That means that a systematic and progressive process of nuclear disarmament is a prerequisite for the strengthening and effective enforcement of nuclear non-proliferation.

The NPT is the cornerstone of the global regime for nuclear non-proliferation and the essential foundation of global nuclear disarmament. The 2005 NPT Review Conference will be crucial and is bound to have considerable impact on the future of the NPT. That is why we need to have an effective and fruitful preparatory process. We note with appreciation the work of the Preparatory Committee at its first session, held in New York in April 2002 and at its second session, held in Geneva in April and May 2003. We call upon the third session of the Preparatory Committee to undertake substantive work to lay the groundwork for the 2005 NPT Review Conference.

The early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is an urgent and necessary step for systematic and progressive nuclear disarmament. We are encouraged by the increasing number of ratifications of the CTBT by signatory States. We welcome the ratification of the Treaty in the past year by Afghanistan, Algeria, Albania, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Kuwait, Mauritania and Oman. We take note with appreciation of the convening of the

third Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT, held in Vienna in September 2003. We welcome the adoption by the Conference of the 12 concrete steps to promote the early entry into force of the Treaty.

It is disappointing that the Conference on Disarmament is still bogged down as the result of an impasse with regard to the programme of work. This is the seventh year that the sole multilateral negotiating forum in the field of disarmament has been paralysed and unable to undertake any substantive work on disarmament issues. Next year — 2004 — ought not to be another blank year for the Conference on Disarmament. The States members of the Conference on Disarmament should do their utmost to overcome the current impasse in that body.

We are heartened by the tangible results accomplished by the States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in dealing with the threat of chemical weapons. We welcome the positive outcome of the First Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, held in The Hague, the Netherlands, from 28 April to 8 May 2003. We hope that the Eighth Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, to be held later this year, will be able to develop a plan of action on national implementation measures and take further concrete steps for the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We recognize the clear and present danger of small arms and light weapons. Such weapons cause an estimated half million casualties every year throughout the world. We need to address in an effective manner the problem of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. The first Biennial Meeting of States on the Implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, held in New York from 7 to 11 July 2003, was an important first step in the follow-up measures on the Programme of Action, adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in New York in July 2001. Under the able leadership of Chairperson Kuniko Inoguchi of Japan, the Biennial Meeting was able to undertake comprehensive and in-depth discussions on important issues such as weapons collection and destruction; marking and tracing; export and import control; capacity-building for implementation;

research; institution-building; and human security. We take note with appreciation the work carried out by the Group of Governmental Experts on Tracing Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. We also join the call on Member States made by the Secretary-General to redouble their efforts to work to achieve a ban on supplying small arms to non-State actors.

I should like to express the profound appreciation of the Myanmar delegation for the substantial contribution made by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific. The countries in the region have benefited a great deal from the regional seminars, workshops and other activities on disarmament issues organized by the Centre. We support the ongoing activities of the Centre, and we urge that more resources be provided to the Centre in order to enable it to conduct more useful activities in the region.

The United Nations symbolizes and stands for multilateralism. We are all for multilateralism. The problems before this Committee and the General Assembly are global problems. There is no denying that global problems require global actions in all areas of human endeavour. Disarmament is no exception. All the important international arms control and disarmament agreements to date, including the NPT, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention, are products of the Conference on Disarmament, and they are, indeed, eloquent testimony to the crucial role and great value of multilateral diplomacy.

Let us therefore rededicate ourselves and renew our firm commitment to multilateralism in the field of arms control and disarmament and in other areas of human endeavour.

Mr. Sharma (Nepal): I warmly congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your unanimous election to preside over the deliberations of this very important Committee. I am proud to see an outstanding diplomat and a very close friend occupying that very important position. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

Let me also welcome Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, and express appreciation to him for his comprehensive remarks early in this session on the pressing issues of disarmament and international security. My delegation also commends Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, the former

Under-Secretary-General, for his invaluable contributions to the cause of disarmament. I would be remiss in my duties if I failed to also congratulate your predecessor, Sir, as Chairman of the First Committee, for his excellent performance during the previous session.

We are meeting again at a time when international security is in a state of turmoil, and disarmament is in a deep slumber. The provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) have been observed more in the breach than in compliance. The fear is growing that terrorists could get hold of weapons of mass destruction, and disarmament is slipping off the list of global priorities.

A stark example of this erosion is the impasse that multilateral disarmament forums now find themselves at. The Disarmament Commission has not been able to agree on the objectives and agenda, or on the setting up of a preparatory committee, for the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

Even worse, the Conference on Disarmament finds itself in a prison of inertia, as its members have failed to agree on a programme of work for the past seven years. Meanwhile, countries with huge stockpiles of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction are adamant about holding onto their deadly arsenals. This has prompted other nations to pursue the nuclear option, and frustrated non-proliferation efforts.

Momentum on the bilateral track of nuclear disarmament has also been lost. No major new initiative has been launched to draw down the stockpiles of nuclear weapons for some time now. We urge the nuclear Powers to develop a strategy soon for reducing and eventually eliminating their nuclear arms in a time-bound manner.

The framework for action already exists in the form of the 13 practical steps included in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. Nuclear Powers must be honest in fulfilling their obligations pursuant to Article VI of the NPT. Whether we like it or not, without the nuclear Powers leading the way by example, non-proliferation will be difficult to achieve and impossible to sustain.

Nepal welcomes the recent entry into force of the Moscow Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions,

agreed to between the United States and the Russian Federation. These countries, together with other nuclear-weapon States, must take irreversible and verifiable new measures steadily to reduce their nuclear arms.

Nuclear technology is fungible and can be misused. Furthermore, nuclear accidents can occur. Both scenarios have devastating consequences. Nepal therefore supports the peaceful use of this technology, but only with reliable precautions and non-discriminatory safeguards.

It is disappointing that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the proposed fissile material cut-off treaty are still stranded. The fact that terrorists are seeking weapons of mass destruction points to the urgency of working on the fissile material cut-off treaty.

I congratulate the countries of Central Asia on the fact that their region will soon become a nuclear-weapons-free zone, bestowing laurels on regional arms-control efforts. I also commend Mongolia for its novel proposal to institutionalize its status as a single State nuclear-free zone. Nepal welcomes the proposals of Egypt and other nations for the establishment of zones free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

Notwithstanding the failures in the field of nuclear disarmament, there is discernible room for optimism on the chemical and biological weapons control regimes. Yet, we need to make sure through strong verification measures that those regimes are not violated and that their integrity is maintained.

A persistent advocate of complete and general disarmament, particularly of nuclear weapons, Nepal supports measures to prevent an arms race in outer space. Likewise, the seabed and the Antarctic, as the common heritage of mankind, should remain pristine.

My delegation strongly holds the view that a growing proliferation of ballistic missiles is a menace to international peace and security. Hence, the need for a multilateral regime to control missiles has become urgent, and we all need to work strenuously to put it together.

Nepal is happy that there is consensus on taking concrete and urgent measures for the implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. But a yawning gap in approaches to combat

the illicit trade in small arms persists. A genuine global partnership is imperative to curb the menace posed by the illicit trade in such arms and to stop their misuse by non-State actors.

We also support the expansion of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as an effective confidence-building measure. In that context, the Panel of Governmental Experts should be encouraged to explore ways and means for making the Register more comprehensive and its information more credible.

The role of regional centres for peace and disarmament is crucial in efforts to speed up the pace and process of disarmament and arms control at the regional level. Nepal is fully committed to relocating without delay the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific to Kathmandu. I urge the Secretariat to pave the way for its early relocation by quickly revising the host country agreement and the memorandum of understanding, consistent with diplomatic practices and precedents. I also urge the international community to provide more resources to the Centre in Asia, so that it can organize more activities beneficial to Asia and the Pacific region.

Multilateralism is the only road that will lead to comprehensive and durable peace in the world. The evolution of a culture of peace founded on conflict prevention, disarmament and mutual confidence is essential for such peace. We ought to wake multilateral disarmament from its deep slumber and put it back on a steady course. The bilateral track must complement and reinforce the multilateral track.

That entails strengthening the multilateral institutions and processes for disarmament and revitalizing the First Committee. My delegation is prepared to work with others to achieve those objectives.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of Nepal for his kind words addressed to me and the other officers of the Bureau.

Mr. Hassan (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it is my pleasure, on behalf of my delegation, to sincerely congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of this important Committee. We are sure that your experience and skills will direct our deliberations towards our objectives in the area of disarmament and international peace and security. Our

delegation also wishes the members of the Bureau every success and congratulates the Chairman at the previous session and the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs for the efforts they have made to improve international cooperation among the various bodies in the area of disarmament and the maintenance of international peace and security.

We are meeting today to discuss disarmament and international security at a moment when the world is undergoing many changes at the regional and international level. This is proof that the only way to ensure international peace and security is to revitalize multilateral action aimed at confronting the dangers of the proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and at ensuring that the imbalance between nuclear and non-nuclear States does not grow. Unfortunately and despite a number of initiatives at the unilateral and bilateral level by some States to reduce their nuclear and strategic stockpiles, certain major States continue to develop their nuclear technologies and biological and chemical weapons. They are carrying out tests in these areas under the pretexts of prevention and the maintenance of international peace and security, despite the numerous conventions, instruments and protocols calling for an end to such practices.

The fact that there are areas where tensions, wars and conflicts exist compels some States to mobilize their defense efforts, resulting in constantly growing military expenditures. Meanwhile, allocated funds and contributions for implementing the provisions of the Millennium Declaration on urgent issues such as poverty, natural disasters and the environment are modest and very limited. There are, therefore, contradictions and imbalances in the existing criteria. We thus urge the nuclear States to take measures, through serious and urgent initiatives, to reduce arms expenditures in preparation for a phased elimination of their nuclear and strategic arsenals. We also support measures aimed at adopting binding international instruments that ensure protection for non-nuclear States from threats by nuclear States.

The report of the Under-Secretary-General submitted to this Committee makes reference to widespread international efforts to establish nuclear-weapons-free zones throughout the world. We believe that that is the best way to achieve nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and, thereby, to

consolidate regional and international peace and security. Security is indivisible.

It is true that a number of States signed the treaties on nuclear-weapon-free zones or are parties to them. Those States represent only 50 per cent of the world's surface area. However, there are many inflamed countries where nuclear-weapon-free zones need to be created, particularly in the Middle East, where such a zone could be created were it not for Israel's refusal to submit its nuclear installations to international controls. That situation is a threat to regional and international peace and security.

Sudan plays an active part in international efforts aimed at disarmament. In addition to acceding to many relevant international treaties and instruments, in August last year it hosted the first conference of African national institutions concerning the Chemical Weapons Ban Treaty. That convention adopted a number of important recommendations, the foremost of which regards the creation of a chemical-weapon-free zone in Africa. Those States should limit the use of chemicals to peaceful purposes only. At the regional level, we take this opportunity to note that multilateralism is the best guarantee for implementing international agreements and treaties.

Last September Sudan also acceded to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, to the Convention on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction.

Another issue of concern to Sudan in the area of disarmament is small arms and light weapons. My country has always taken an active part in regional and international forums on ending the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, in addition to our regional efforts through the national bureau against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. There is a mutual relationship between the proliferation of those weapons, transnational organized crime, terrorism and the illicit drug trade. Sudan is making efforts on many levels to control those weapons within the African Union and within the Arab League and other forums. Those efforts complement our bilateral efforts with neighbouring countries to create better customs

controls and other controls on the movements of such weapons.

We also reassert that in order to prevent the proliferation of those weapons, the industrialized countries must commit themselves not to export them to non-State groups and individuals. Here, we reassert the need to support, in particular at the technical level, those States that are making a transition from war to peace and stability, especially in the areas of disarmament, demobilization and the reintegration of ex-combatants.

Our discussion in this session differs from previous discussions, given the tension that exists in a number of regions throughout the world because of armament and the fear that weapons of mass destruction could fall into the hands of terrorists.

It is therefore our conclusion that the responsibility of this Committee is now more important than ever. Any reform that takes place should not diminish its mandate in the area of disarmament and international security, especially since today's world demands that there be concentrated efforts focusing on development, the environment, peace and rehabilitation. Such efforts must be at the service of people, not at the service of war and destruction.

Mr. Tekle (Eritrea): Allow me to join others before me in congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, on your election as the Chairman of the First Committee. I also wish to seize this opportunity to congratulate the other members of the Bureau. I am certain that, with your vast experience and proven skills, you will be able to guide us to a successful conclusion of our deliberations. Allow me also to congratulate Mr. Nobuyasu Abe on his appointment as Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs and to thank him for his useful introductory remarks.

As always, issues related to international security, disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction continue to predominate our deliberations, and, as always, there have been mixed results during the past year as achievements have been countervailed by challenges.

It has been gratifying to note that the Ottawa Convention on Anti-personnel Mines, the Biological and Chemical Weapons Conventions and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) have attracted the signature or ratification of more Member

States, while the Ad Hoc Group of States parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention has achieved significant progress in its effort to establish a verification and compliance regime. However, it is a matter of serious concern that recent developments have resulted in the loss of hope in the disarmament process.

On one hand, the Conference on Disarmament has not yet achieved any progress because of the failure of negotiations on nuclear disarmament and on the fissile materials treaty. On the other hand, the CTBT — which, I am pleased to announce, my country has now signed — has yet to enter into force, while the implementation of the recommendations of the Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains in doubt.

Equally ominous are recent developments, which indicate the possible risk of the use of nuclear weapons in any future armed conflict. The problem is compounded by the threat posed by terrorism and the distinct possibility that weapons of mass destruction can be easily acquired by terrorist groups. In a globalized world, such globalized threats become global concerns that demand global actions.

It is a hackneyed but valid truism that disarmament benefits mankind not only because it eliminates threats to peace, security and, indeed, civilization, but also because it may help to divert scarce material and financial resources to development efforts. Every available human development report confirms that the development goals of the Millennium Declaration could be achieved with only a small fraction of the trillion dollars spent on armaments by nations big and small.

Non-proliferation can and must be achieved. The Eritrean delegation is convinced that the NPT and CTBT continue to be the only viable options for complete and universal disarmament. Accordingly, serious efforts must be exerted to ensure the success of the NPT Preparatory Committee meeting in Geneva and of the 2005 Review Conference itself.

Eritrea would also welcome the resumption of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention and hopes that it will be able to reach an agreement on a final declaration, which will strengthen the Convention. Conventional weapons have been the major instruments of destruction during the past few decades, particularly in the third world. The

improvement in production technology, the sophistication and availability of limitless quantities of weapons and the eagerness of the arms producers to sell have enabled conflicting parties, in both inter- and intra-State conflicts, to avail themselves of these weapons and to use them with wilful abandon.

The combination of irresponsibility, callousness and greed have not only caused massive destruction to life and property but have also drained meager financial resources which could have been used to combat extreme poverty and famine, and have destroyed the already fragile economies of, and destabilized, numerous countries.

For this reason the 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 assumes significance. Meaningful implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms can be achieved only if collective and individual action is taken at the international, regional and subregional levels.

Let us, for example, take the case of Somalia in the Horn of Africa. That beleaguered country is unnecessarily suffering from an influx of an inordinate amount of small arms and light weapons supplied by one of its neighbours, which hopes to influence events in that country by destabilizing it. The people and Government of Somalia have already publicly identified that country. It behooves this neighbour to realize that its interests can best be served not by lawlessness, callous disregard for the rule of law and deliberate violation of international conventions, but by assisting the return of a united and stable Somalia to its rightful place in the international community.

The international community must not tolerate that some Governments squander their meagre resources on buying weapons for their illegal and immoral military adventures against their neighbours, while their populations are being ravaged by extreme poverty and decimated by famines of biblical proportions. It must not countenance a political culture that nourishes and sustains the "arms and alms" diplomacy of irresponsible and immoral Governments that shamelessly and publicly scold donor Governments for hesitating to send food aid while the former purchase arms with wilful abandon.

Landmines have become threats to human security and to the stability and welfare of States in

many regions of the world, and, particularly in Africa, the very existence of those States is threatened. The Horn of Africa is also one of the adversely affected regions.

The Eritrean people have been victims of anti-personnel landmines all during the thirty-year liberation struggle and the three-year war in defence of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of their country. Indeed, innocent civilians, who are the primary victims of landmines, continue to suffer because of Ethiopian landmines planted after the signing of the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the two countries. This has been confirmed by the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) on several occasions. It is for this reason that Eritrea is committed to the creation of a regional and international environment genuinely free from anti-personnel mines. This would be good for security and development, as well as for peaceful relations and cooperation between neighbours. Accordingly, we welcome the good results achieved during the fourth meeting of State parties held in Geneva in 2002.

However, it must be recognized that the signing and ratification of the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Treaty will be meaningless as long as a few rogue States continue to produce and sell those infernal weapons to an equally few rogue States that use them against law-abiding States that have been faithfully implementing the Convention but may, sooner or later, have second thoughts about their goodwill and good deeds.

Eritrea has a deep and abiding interest in the maintenance of peace and security and the peaceful settlement of disputes, if only because it has first-hand experience of the negative consequences of war and conflict on the development of nations and the welfare of their peoples. Even during the liberation struggle, Eritreans only insisted on the peaceful exercise of their right to self-determination. During the last war, they steadfastly advocated a peaceful resolution to the territorial dispute with Ethiopia, as they had done with their other neighbours. They have invariably acted honourably and in good faith.

Thus, the Eritreans held a referendum, two years after the liberation of their country, even though they had won the war. They accepted the verdict of the Eritrea-Yemen Arbitration Commission without condition or reservation and implemented it promptly.

They resolved their problems peacefully with Djibouti and accepted the decision of the Eritrea-Ethiopia arbitration commission without much ado. Yet, the decision has not been implemented because Ethiopia decided to reject the unanimous, final and binding decision of an arbitration commission that was sanctioned by the Security Council and whose decisions have been endorsed by the United Nations and the international community.

Consequently, peace, security, stability and peaceful development are in the balance. Ethiopia, in fact, has declared that it is still committed to the cause of war by threatening to use force against any attempt to make it leave territories that it is occupying in contravention of the arbitration decision.

Eritrea has always been ready to engage in political dialogue with a view to fostering cooperative relations with all its neighbours because of its vision of, and hope for, a new zone of peace, stability and cooperative relations in the Horn of Africa. That vision was articulated even before formal independence. That vision and hope became official policy after formal independence and remain as valid today as they were a decade ago.

Yet, dialogue and confidence-building efforts do not thrive in a vacuum but on a wellspring of good faith and a commitment to the rule of law and the principle of “*pacta sunt servanda*”. A demonstration of good faith on the part of Ethiopia, a public announcement that Ethiopia accepts all of the decisions of the Boundary Commission without reservation, including the decision that Badme and its environs belong to Eritrea, and the faithful and expeditious implementation of that decision will lead to confidence-building dialogue. Any other option is a non-starter.

The Chairman: That completes the list of speakers for this afternoon.

I recognize the representative of Ethiopia, speaking in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Kidane (Ethiopia): It saddens me to take the floor at this time. I would like to mention one point. The Eritrean representative is speaking of peace. But it is known to everybody in this Hall that Eritrea has invaded almost all of its neighbours during the about 10 years of its existence. We have said this several times and are obliged to repeat it again.

Eritrea, a country with a population of about 3 million people, maintains an army of more than 300,000 or 400,000, which constitutes at least 10 per cent of its population. Eritrea is one of the poorest countries and yet it maintains an army as big as 300,000, one tenth of its population. It still blames Ethiopia for defending itself against the outrageously aggressive behaviour of Eritrea. Eritrea behaves as if it were a country inundated with affluence.

On the last issue, because it was mentioned by the Eritrean delegate, the Rwandan and American facilitators, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the OAU Chairman, who was President Compaore at the time, all made it clear that Eritrea was the aggressor and that Ethiopia was the victim of aggression.

Just to mention some reports, the OAU delegation, the committee of Ambassadors stated the following in its conclusions:

“We have reached the conclusion that Badme town and its environs were administered by the Ethiopian authorities before 12 May 1998.”

President Compaore, in his letter to the Eritrean President, stated the following:

“I submit to you a solemn appeal, in the name of the OAU and its high-level delegation, that you accept our proposal that the Eritrean Government agree to redeploy its troops out of Ethiopian territories occupied after 6 May 1998.”

The United States Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Susan Rice, had the following to say:

“A week later, Eritrea sent troops and armour into and beyond Badme into territory administered by Ethiopia. After several weeks of fighting ... the Badme area and areas near Zela Ambessa and Bure, south of the port of Assab fell under Eritrean control.”

There are abundant authorities testifying to the fact that Eritrea never was a victim of aggression. It was the aggressor.

Mr. Tekle (Eritrea): We are talking about aggression and the victims of aggression. Supporting our documents are arguments at two different levels. To set the record straight, the committee of Ambassadors and the Algiers agreement confirmed that the ownership of Badme would be decided — and this is

part of the Algiers agreement and you can find it in the repeated reports of the Boundary Commission — after the decision of the Boundary Commission.

Now the Boundary Commission had decided that Badme is indeed part of southern Eritrean territory. That decision is a legal decision; it is binding and final. Both countries have accepted it. So when we speak about aggression, we need to talk about the location of Badme. One does not commit aggression against one's own territory. One may be pushing people out from one's territory, but that, by any definition, cannot be considered aggression.

The Arbitration Commission has decided that Badme is part of Eritrean territory, but the Government of Ethiopia has rejected this final and binding decision. This act of lawlessness has been identified as such, not only by the Boundary Commission, but by the Security Council, the European Union, and the African Union, which have sanctioned and mandated the Commission and have endorsed its decisions. This is why, in responding to the letters of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi a few weeks ago, they noted with regret that Ethiopia is not implementing the decision, is not cooperating with the Commission and is violating the Algiers agreement. They request the Ethiopian Government to provide full and prompt cooperation to the Boundary Commission and its field officers and remind Ethiopia of the obligations both parties have to bring the peace process to a successful end. We rest our case.

The Chairman: I would remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, the number of interventions in the exercise of the right of the reply for any delegation at a given meeting should be limited to two per item, and that the first intervention in the exercise of the right of the reply should be limited to ten minutes and the second intervention should be limited to five minutes.

Mr. Kidane (Ethiopia): Just to set the record straight, Ethiopia stands committed to the Algiers agreement and to the Boundary Commission's decision.

It is very unfortunate that almost all United Nations Committees are condemned to listen to our allegations and counter-allegations. Eritrea has been accusing us in all forums. We talked about the same thing at the General Assembly, and today we are talking in this forum about the same issue, and it will be another committee another day. It is really

unfortunate that we have to be dragged into this and that this body has to be subjected to this drudgery.

Mr. Tekle (Eritrea): The representative of Ethiopia has just stated that his Government has not rejected the Algiers agreement. First, it would be appropriate to ask why the Security Council would be constrained to make the following response to the letter addressed to it by the Prime Minister of Ethiopia on 19 September. Allow me to quote extensively from that letter:

“The Security Council assures Ethiopia that it steadfastly supports the completion of the peace process and the full and expeditious implementation of the Algiers agreement, that only the full implementation of the Algiers agreement will lead to sustainable peace, and that it regrets the intention of the Government of Ethiopia not to accept the entirety of the delimitation and demarcation decision as decided by the Boundary Commission. It calls upon the Government of Ethiopia to provide its full and prompt cooperation.”

Secondly, why would the Prime Minister of Ethiopia then write that “Nothing worthwhile can therefore be expected from the Commission to salvage the peace process,” and request the creation of an alternative mechanism? Although he is well aware that the Boundary Commission, which was mandated by the Security Council to hand down the final and binding decision, is the most central institution of the peace process, we wonder how he envisages a durable peace, since his country has rejected the final and binding decision of the Commission, which is obviously the sole United Nations mechanism.

Mr. Al-Ayashi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): The representative of Eritrea stated that his country was committed without restriction to respecting the arbitration decision with regard to the dispute between the two countries. We appreciate that, but we do want to recall that problems remain. Eritrea has not completely respected that fact. There are problems remaining, in particular regarding fisheries.

The Chairman: Before adjourning the meeting, let me remind all delegations again that the deadline for submission of draft resolutions under all disarmament and international security agenda items is this coming Wednesday, 15 October, at 6 p.m.

Delegations are urged to kindly submit their draft resolutions as soon as possible in order to enable the Secretariat to make them available as official documents to the Committee for the second phase of its work.

Furthermore, as I have stated earlier, I would like to allocate some time for the Committee to discuss ways to improve its working methods. I would thus like to use the meeting time allocated to the Committee on Thursday and Friday, 16 and 17 October, for an informal exchange of views on the subject. Therefore, it is my wish to conclude the first phase of the Committee's work, namely, the general debate on all disarmament and related international security agenda items by this coming Wednesday.

However, two delegations found it impossible to move their statements forward by a few days. Consequently, it is the intention of the Chair to begin on Thursday by allowing these two delegations to make their statements. Immediately following those statements, I plan to adjourn the meeting and switch to an informal setting, so that the Committee may conduct its informal exchange of views regarding its working methods.

For those delegations that were able to move forward their statements, I would like to express, once again, my heartfelt appreciation for the spirit of flexibility and cooperation that they have shown.

Concerning the second phase of the Committee's work, namely the thematic discussion on item subjects and the introduction and consideration of draft resolutions, in order for the Committee to have a structured discussion and fully and efficiently utilize the conference services available to it, I have prepared an indicative timetable, based on the established practice of the Committee for that phase of its work. I believe that the indicative timetable has been distributed to the Committee as document A/C.1/58/CRP.2.

In submitting this indicative timetable, I followed the practice already established by the Committee during previous sessions of the General Assembly. Consequently, I would like to propose that we carry out our discussion in the following manner: the meetings on Monday, 20 October, will be dedicated to questions related to nuclear weapons. The meeting on Tuesday, 21 October, will be dedicated to other weapons of mass destruction, and outer space, disarmament aspects

thereof. The meeting on Wednesday, 22 October, will be devoted to questions concerning conventional weapons. At the meeting on Thursday, 23 October, we will discuss regional disarmament, confidence-building measures, including transparency in armaments, together with other disarmament measures and disarmament machinery. On Friday, 24 October, the morning's meeting will be devoted to a discussion on related matters of disarmament and international security, and the afternoon's meeting will be devoted to further comments on any of the aforementioned items.

In this connection, I would like to indicate that, in the event we finish the discussion of issues planned for a given meeting, we will continue our discussion, moving to the next issue on our timetable if delegations are prepared for that. I, therefore, kindly request all delegations to be prepared to do so. Nonetheless, it is well understood that a degree of flexibility will be maintained, and delegations will be given an opportunity to address any question at any time, if they so desire.

The indicative timetable, as I have just outlined, is rather flexible, as in past sessions, and is in accordance with the adopted decisions on the rationalization of the work of the Committee. In other words, the Committee's work will combine the discussion of specific subjects and the introduction or consideration of all draft resolutions so that sufficient time can be allowed for information consultations and discussions of all draft resolutions. I would like to reiterate that we will be flexible in order to accommodate delegations' wishes.

I would also like to mention that at the last meeting of the second stage of our work, that is on Friday, 24 October, delegations will still be able to introduce any remaining draft resolutions. This will certainly enable the Committee to have sufficient time during the action phase of its work. I therefore strongly urge all delegations to do their utmost to introduce their draft resolutions during the second phase of the work of the Committee next week.

May I take it that the proposed indicative timetable for our thematic discussion is acceptable to all delegations?

Mr. Koffler (Austria): Thank you for this indicative timetable, Mr. Chairman, and all the efforts you have put into that. I have one question. Did I

understand correctly that remaining draft resolutions should be introduced by Friday, 24 October?

The Chairman: Yes, as I indicated, at the last meeting on Friday, 24 October, delegations that have not yet done so will still be able to introduce any remaining draft resolutions.

I see no other requests for the floor, so may I take it that this proposed indicative timetable for our thematic discussion is acceptable to all delegations? I hear no objection.

It was so decided.

Although there will be no formal list of speakers for the second phase of our work, I would nevertheless suggest that delegations inform the Secretariat of their plans to speak prior to the specific meeting, if at all possible. If not, requests for interventions will have to be taken directly from the floor on the given day.

Mr. Sattar (Secretary of the Committee): A meeting of sponsors of the draft resolution entitled "Transparency in armaments", under agenda item 73 (q), organized by the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands, will take place on Tuesday, 14 October, at 10 a.m., in Conference Room 5.

Also, an information meeting for the draft resolution entitled, "National legislation on transfer of arms, military equipment, and dual-use goods and technology", under agenda item 73 (i), organized by the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands, will take place in Conference Room 5, at 10.30 a.m., on Tuesday, 14 October.

An open-ended informal consultation on a draft resolution on agenda item 73 (v) entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction", organized by the Permanent Mission of Poland, will take place, on Tuesday, 14 October, at 11.30 a.m., in Conference Room 5.

Finally, I wish to inform members of the Committee that the African Group of States will meet immediately after adjournment of this afternoon's meeting of the First Committee in Conference Room 4.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.