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First Committee

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Chairman: Mr. De Alba (Mexico)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda items 57 to 72 (continued)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): Before giving the floor to the first speaker, I should like to welcome the participants in the 2004 United Nations Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament who are in the room today to follow the proceedings of the First Committee.

Mr. Bar (Israel): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. Let me assure you of my own and my delegation's full support, cooperation and assistance as you discharge your duties during the course of this session of the First Committee. Let me also say that I am confident in your ability to guide us through our deliberations.

For many years, the meetings of the First Committee have been the culmination of the disarmament and arms control working year. The First Committee, however, cannot operate in a vacuum, divorced from existing and emerging threats. If it wishes to preserve its integrity and to continue to play an important and active role, it must address the most relevant and urgent challenges to security and stability facing the global community. By adjusting its priorities accordingly, the deliberations of this body will bring

added value to the safety of humankind. Our overall objective should be to adopt a realistic and pragmatic approach by taking into account the threats posed by recent global and regional developments.

Dealing obstinately with outdated or irrelevant issues has brought the entire multilateral community to an impasse from which we can hardly see a way out. The stalemate we are witnessing in the various disarmament institutions — be it in the Conference on Disarmament, the Disarmament Commission or the First Committee — is clearly the result of an unhealthy approach with an all-or-nothing logic.

The further proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) remains a source of grave concern and one of the primary challenges to national, regional and global security. Moreover, the irresponsible behaviour of States — and their reluctance to comply with their commitments — limited verification capabilities and global terror, including the involvement of non-State actors in WMD proliferation — have strengthened the host of threats to international security and stability. Major events in the past two years exemplify those worrisome developments. Primary among them are the serial non-compliance of Iran, the case of Libya and the A. Q. Khan trafficking network — whose magnitude and the potential of whose customers are yet to be fully disclosed.

The past year has also starkly demonstrated that traditional mechanisms developed to ensure

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verification and compliance have proven to be limited in their capacity to provide the necessary security assurances to be relied upon. Unfortunately, that has been evident more so in the Middle East, where so many of those developments have transpired.

Those emerging threats are not confined only to non-conventional weapons. The dangers of the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons have remained a considerable threat to international security and to the day-to-day life of many innocent civilians all over the world. That threat has been exacerbated by the dangers arising from the use of man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS) by terrorists. The international community should find ways and means to reduce that threat by enhancing control over MANPADS, limiting access to them and developing methods to protect civil aviation. In that context, we welcome the initiative by the Australian delegation to introduce a draft resolution on this issue in the First Committee. We also welcome the adoption last year by the Wassenaar Arrangement of export control guidelines on MANPADS. Israel is proud to report that we have incorporated those guidelines into our export control regulations.

Over the past few years, terrorism has brought about the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians. The linkage between terrorism and the proliferation of WMDs is no longer a theoretical abstraction, but rather an all too tangible reality. In addition to the existing threat of proliferation by States, we now face an evolving threat where terrorists have horrific aspirations to obtain weapons of mass destruction. That dangerous phenomenon, combined with the broadening trend of suicide terrorism, provides a potentially apocalyptic vehicle for all who would totally obstruct the changes necessary to bring about a climate of security and stability, both regionally and globally. There can be no euphemism for terrorism; we must address it as it really is.

Sadly, we must note that, only last week, terror struck again, this time in Egypt, killing tens of Israelis on vacation and their Egyptian hosts. Once again, we note that terrorism does not make a distinction among States, peoples or religions. Turkey, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Spain and Russia are all recent victims of the same ideology led by the principle of hatred: hatred for the free world, hatred for democratic values and human rights and hatred for peace and reconciliation. The tens of thousands of Israelis who

chose the beaches of Sinai to spend their holidays, as well the thousands of Egyptians who were their hosts, reflect the strong desire for a normal, quiet and peaceful life. The terrorist attack was an attack on all those who wish for a better future for the Middle East.

Traditional and emerging threats require firm and decisive action by the international community. In addition, we also need fresh solutions for today's new challenges. The First Committee can take part in that international quest by endorsing the suggestions made by the delegation of the United States and others with regard to the follow-up to resolution 58/41. The introduction of that resolution was the first step towards enhancing the international community's resolve to more effectively address the problems at hand. Israel looks forward to the continued evolution of those ideas.

Israel supports, and participates in, international efforts to identify concrete and effective steps against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We believe that cooperation and coordination at the international level, or between like-minded countries, should be strengthened significantly. Accordingly, Israel welcomes Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which expressed grave concern about the threat of the illicit trafficking in nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery — in particular to non-State actors. In that regard, Israel has also expressed its support for the Proliferation Security Initiative.

In our view, similar and equal determination should be attached to bilateral and multilateral efforts to curb the transfer, acquisition and use by terrorists of MANPADS and very short-range rockets and missiles. We believe that export control regimes constitute an essential tool in the fight against efforts made by both State and non-State actors to acquire WMD-related materials. Israel fully associates itself with the efforts made by the export control regimes to update their lists and guidelines in order to counter the new challenges I have described.

We believe that a realistic approach to confronting those dangerous threats begins at home, through responsible and clear policies that prevent proliferation. Individual States can strengthen the international community's joint efforts towards those ends, but each State should account for its own actions. International decisions cannot be a substitute for

national control of sensitive materials and for accountability for actions carried out under its jurisdiction.

For its part, on 30 March this year, Israel adopted a new export and import control order designed to consolidate and further regulate control over chemical, biological and nuclear exports. The new order includes a catch-all provision that prohibits the export of materials and items designated for WMD programmes and establishes a licensing requirement for sensitive items based on lists of the Australia Group and the Nuclear Suppliers Group. In addition, it should also be noted that in 1991 Israel has adopted in its domestic legislation the guidelines and annex of the Missile Technology Control Regime. Israel has remained an adherent to that important Regime since then, and has continued to develop its working relations with that organization.

Moreover, in view of regional threats and the need for responsible and cautious policies, Israel enforces strict controls on conventional defence exports, including the export of technologies and know-how. However, we find it necessary to underline the fact that the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons to terrorist groups in our region continues with the ongoing assistance of certain States.

As mentioned earlier in our statement, the world has been confronted with emerging threats to security and stability. Unfortunately, a large part of that reality is playing itself out in the Middle East. Some States in our region have resolved to create a dangerous combination of developing WMD capabilities, in total disregard of their international obligations; contacts with non-State actors in the field of the transfer of arms and sensitive materials; and support for terrorist organizations. The combination of those irresponsible behaviours coupled with public threats against the very existence of the State of Israel is leading our region far from the vision of peace and security. The ramifications of that dangerous situation will echo well beyond the confines of the Middle East and affect stability on a global scale.

The events of the past year, especially in our region, have boldly underlined the discrepancies between the official commitments of States in the Middle East and their actual behaviour. That reality, along with the inherent limitations of arms control treaties, is just another reminder of the inability of

treaties to provide Israel with the necessary security assurances. Moreover, the very States involved in developing their WMD capabilities in defiance of their international obligations have also chosen the path of hostility and animosity. There is thus no substitute in the Middle East for a gradual process of confidence-building based on direct dialogue and negotiations involving all parties and leading to the construction of a regional security framework.

Over the years, the disarmament machinery of the United Nations, including the First Committee, has become an arena for wrangling between the differing interests of groups and States. We therefore feel that, in order to change that reality, we should create a collective interest in more focused and pragmatic action directly related to the most significant challenges to security. Agendas of virtual reality, motivated by extraneous political interests and with little connection to actual regional risks, should make way for a new and realistic agenda that would seek to effectively strengthen international security and stability. In our view, improving the effectiveness of the methods of work First Committee should provide the General Assembly with better means to address the challenges to security and stability.

I apologize for the length of my statement.

Mr. Than (Myanmar): The greatest security threat facing humankind today is the threat of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), particularly nuclear weapons. Another grave threat staring us in the face today is the threat of terrorism. The international community has been concerned about the possibility of the nightmare scenario of WMDs falling into the hands of terrorists. We should step up international efforts to deal with, and overcome, those horrendous threats.

Nuclear disarmament is therefore the highest priority on the international arms control and disarmament agenda. As a strong advocate of nuclear disarmament, every year since 1995 Myanmar has introduced in the First Committee a comprehensive draft resolution on nuclear disarmament reflecting the views of the majority of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement. We shall introduce such a draft resolution on nuclear disarmament in the First Committee this year as well. We hope that our draft resolution will enjoy the overwhelming support of member States.

The benchmarks for the implementation of nuclear disarmament were laid down by the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We should therefore measure progress made in the systematic and progressive efforts aimed at nuclear disarmament against those benchmarks. The fulfilment of the first of those 13 steps — namely, the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) — still remains elusive. We are, however, encouraged to note that the status of the ratification of the CTBT is improving at a steady pace. As of today, the Treaty has been signed by a total of 173 States and ratified by 119 States, including 33 of the 44 States listed in annex 2 of the Treaty. The latest ratification was that of the United Republic of Tanzania, on 30 September 2004. The early entry into force of the CTBT is an imperative for the effective implementation of nuclear disarmament. It is therefore essential that countries listed in annex 2 ratify the Treaty as soon as possible.

The Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral negotiating forum in the field of disarmament, is still unable to reach agreement on a programme of work and to begin its real substantive work. An agreement on the programme of work is our highest priority in the Conference on Disarmament. There were, however, some significant developments during the Conference's 2004 session. On 12 February 2004, the Conference took a decision on enhancing the participation of civil society in its work. Under successive presidencies, the Conference on Disarmament has conducted 12 structured informal plenary meetings on the issues on its agenda, on new and additional issues related to its agenda and on the methodology of the programme of work, as well as on how to move forward on substantive issues, the programme of work and the assessment and stock-taking of informal plenary meetings. That has generated interest and momentum in the Conference on Disarmament. We should take advantage of that interest and momentum and intensify efforts to reach an agreement on a programme of work at the beginning of Conference's 2005 session.

We should like to reiterate here the importance of the forthcoming 2005 NPT Review Conference and the need for a positive outcome. There are three main pillars to the NPT: nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It

would not be correct or effective to address one issue in isolation from the other two. To deal with the issue of nuclear non-proliferation while putting the other two issues on the back burner would definitely not be the right way to achieve positive results at the 2005 NPT Review Conference.

We highly appreciate the excellent work carried out by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific in promoting regional dialogue on regional and international disarmament issues and in organizing many seminars, workshops and meetings in that respect. We should like in particular to thank Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs; Mr. Tsutomu Ishiguri, Director of the Regional Centre; the Department for Disarmament Affairs; and the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific for their important contributions. We endorse the view that the Centre should be provided with adequate financial resources to enable it to sustain and expand its activities for the benefit of the region's Member States.

Finally, I wish briefly to touch upon the question of improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee. My delegation fully endorses the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on this subject on behalf of member States that are members of the Non-Aligned Movement. Measures to improve the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee should be undertaken as part of, and within, the overall process of the revitalization of the General Assembly. Moreover, the existing methods of work of the First Committee that have proven to be effective should be maintained, further consolidated and strengthened.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): At the outset, allow me, on behalf of my delegation, to join others in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. We trust that your rich experience will guide our work to a successful conclusion. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau. You can all be assured of my delegation's full support. I should also like to express my delegation's thanks to Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his opening remarks. We appreciate very much the good job that the Department for Disarmament Affairs is doing.

My delegation wishes to express its confidence in the work of the First Committee, which is charged with the task of ensuring a peaceful and secure world. In that regard, I wish to reaffirm Tanzania's faith in the United Nations, particularly with regard to its crucial role in the promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. That is the most rational approach in securing international peace and security.

In the past year there was little progress in the field of disarmament. Nothing substantial has been achieved to advance the disarmament process since we met here during the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

We need to take more proactive measures to remove the ever-threatening spectre of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). Those weapons, and nuclear weapons in particular, whether in the hands of States or of non-State entities, pose the greatest threat to human civilization.

Tanzania welcomes Libya's decision to get rid of its nuclear and chemical weapons programmes. All countries that possess weapons of mass destruction should emulate Libya's example. We see no moral or military justification for any country to continue to possess and rely upon weapons of mass destruction, whether for its defence or as a deterrent, when their use, intentionally or accidentally, could trigger the total annihilation of our world and its civilization.

With seven months remaining before the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), much needs to be done to make sure we achieve a successful Conference. Despite the fact that we all agree that the NPT is the cornerstone of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, some States do not seem prepared to honour their part of the agreement. It is regrettable that, as we come closer to the 2005 NPT Review Conference, the 13 practical steps agreed to in 2000 have not been implemented. That is despite the fact that nuclear-weapon States unequivocally undertook to eliminate their nuclear arsenals. Worse still, we are witnessing new nuclear doctrines, including the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. As if that were not enough, new types of more sophisticated and concealable nuclear weapons and their delivery systems are being researched and

developed. All of that undermines and contravenes the spirit and the letter of the NPT.

The proliferation and use of weapons of mass destruction is a source of grave concern for my delegation. More ominous still is the danger of terrorists acquiring and using weapons of mass destruction. In view of that, my delegation believes that the best way to deny terrorists easy access to weapons of mass destruction is to close all the loopholes that might exist. That should include the strengthening of international instruments that deal with nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. In that context, the universalization of the Chemical Weapons Convention should be encouraged. In the same vein, we call on all States parties to fully comply with the Chemical Weapons Convention. Equally important and urgent is the need to reach an agreement as soon as possible on a strong verification mechanism for the Biological Weapons Convention. The longer we delay in reaching an agreement, the greater the chances of the proliferation of biological weapons.

I am pleased to inform the Committee that, on 30 September 2004, Tanzania ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We have no nuclear capability, but we believe that our signature of the Treaty confirms that the CTBT is one of the most important instruments for advancing global nuclear non-proliferation. The Treaty is an effective confidence-building measure in ending the nuclear arms race, as well as in the process of eliminating nuclear weapons. We call upon those States that have not done so, and in particular upon those whose ratification is required for its entry into force, to ratify the CTBT, to lead us in that decisive global undertaking.

We welcome the report of the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on the relationship between disarmament and development. It is important for the international community to seriously consider and implement recommendations put forward by the Group. Chief among them is the recommendation that there is a need to reduce ever-rising military expenditures and to release the resulting funds for socio-economic activities. The much-talked-about peace dividend following the end of the cold war has not yet materialized.

My delegation reaffirms its support for efforts aimed at combating illicit trafficking in small arms and

light weapons. The devastation wrought by small arms in regional and internal conflicts in recipient countries in the developing world has fuelled violent conflicts and caused unrelenting civilian deaths, destruction of livelihoods and mass human displacement. We need concerted international action to arrest that situation. Tanzania has been participating, and will continue to participate, in all subregional, regional and international processes aimed at addressing that problem.

Next month, States parties to the Ottawa Convention on landmines will meet in Nairobi, Kenya, for the first Review Conference. Significant progress has been made at the national, regional and international levels in the campaign against anti-personnel mines. As instruments of warfare, mines are anachronistic and inhumane. Tanzania has passed that threshold by destroying all its mine stockpiles in advance of the Conference. Nevertheless, the Ottawa Convention lacks universality and still faces many challenges. We believe that humanity would be better served if all countries ratified the treaty while at the same time the international community increased its assistance to mine-affected countries.

My delegation fully supports efforts aimed at improving the effectiveness of the methods of the First Committee. The reform of the First Committee should be part of the revitalization of the General Assembly as a whole. It should not be done in isolation. More important, however, reform should address the most urgent challenges that we face today, namely, those associated with general and complete disarmament. We will not have achieved anything if the reforms do not bear fruit.

In conclusion, I wish to caution the First Committee that it should avoid falling into the trap that the Disarmament Commission has fallen into. Nor should we allow ourselves to be turned into another Conference on Disarmament, which has been stalled for the past eight years.

Mr. Milad (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your election to the chairmanship of this important Committee. Through you, I also wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

The fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly is the first to be convened since Libya's declaration, on 19 December 2003, that it would voluntarily give up its

programmes and equipment that could lead to the production of internationally prohibited weapons. This is therefore an important opportunity for us to express our concerns with regard to many issues, specifically those associated with disarmament and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons. Libya's initiative has illustrated my country's belief that the arms race serves neither its own security nor that of the region. In fact, it runs counter to our strong desire to create a world of peace and security. Libya calls on all States without exception to emulate its example, beginning with the countries of the Middle East, and avoiding double standards.

As was clear from the announcement of our initiative, Libya sought to acquire a non-traditional defence capability at a time when it felt that its security was threatened and that conventional weapons and regional and international arrangements were incapable of countering that threat. Libya believed that it required the necessary means of protecting its independence and sovereignty, in particular because other States in the region possess weapons of mass destruction.

Libya believes that the world has experienced radical changes in the past decade. These have led us to think in a different way and to follow a different policy. That policy takes into account the major developments that have taken place in international relations, while at the same time seeking to safeguard our national interests without ignoring the interests of other States and of humankind in general. We therefore began several years ago to review our weapons programmes, including our efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction. In doing so, we have reached the following conclusions.

First, the maintenance of international peace and security requires that we contribute positively to disarmament in the Middle East, particularly in the area of weapons of mass destruction. Secondly, weapons of mass destruction are of no avail in the long term. In any case, their results are incalculable and tragic. Thirdly, weapons of mass destruction represent the same level of danger for those who possess them as for those who would be its targets. Fourthly, while weapons of mass destruction are a means of protection, they also require protection themselves. And fifthly, weapons of mass destruction cause an ongoing

bleeding of funds at the expense of the economic and social development and prosperity of the people.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in many parts of the world is a matter of great concern to us. Despite the fact that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) entered into force in 1970 and the fact that six Review Conferences have been held to assess the status of the Treaty, the results to date are still disappointing. It is impossible to predict the catastrophes that could be caused by the nuclear arms race. There is therefore a huge responsibility incumbent upon States that acquire such weapons, particularly upon States in the Middle East. I am referring here to the Zionist entity, which continues to refuse to accede to the NPT or to place its nuclear arsenal and facilities under the comprehensive safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The international community should apply serious and decisive pressure on that entity to accede without delay to the NPT and to sign an IAEA safeguards agreement and additional protocol.

We also call upon all nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their commitments under article VI of the NPT and to implement all the provisions of the Final Document adopted at the sixth NPT Review Conference, in 2000, as well as paragraph 4 of the 1995 resolution regarding making the Middle East a zone free of nuclear weapons.

The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) this year. We have also signed the IAEA Additional Protocol, as we wish to contribute effectively to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and to the dismantling of weapons of mass destruction.

In the last nine months, officials from the relevant organizations have visited Libya, prominent among them Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency; Mr. Rogelio Pfirter, Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons; Mr. Wolfgang Hoffmann, Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Committee for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization; and Mr. Carlos Sersale di Cerisano, current Chairman of the Missile Technology Control Regime. They carried out positive discussions with Libyan officials. Libya has also hosted many inspection teams from those

organizations. We provided everything necessary to enable them to carry out their work, in addition to providing them with all the information they requested.

My delegation would like to underscore the need to energize the Conference on Disarmament, which has to date not been able to reach agreement on its programme of work or made any progress with regard to the issues it is addressing, including concluding a non-discriminatory and internationally verifiable convention to prohibit the production of fissile materials destined for the production of nuclear weapons.

My delegation supports the principle of multilateralism in the field of disarmament as the sole way to bring about complete and general disarmament.

The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has faced many problems as a result of the presence of a large number of landmines, explosive remnants of war and other munitions. United Nations estimates point to the presence of no fewer than 10 million mines planted on Libyan territory during the Second World War, which have led to the death, injury or disabling of thousands of innocent civilians. In that connection, we emphasize the need for the countries that planted those mines to assume responsibility by immediately and fully responding to the call to provide my country with maps and other information associated with the planting of those mines. We also wish to emphasize the importance of compensating victims and their families for the harm they suffered as the result of landmine explosions.

My delegation calls for making the Mediterranean region a zone of peace in which all the peoples of the region live in harmony and mutual respect. We believe that will not come to pass without the withdrawal of all foreign fleets from the Mediterranean and the removal of all foreign military bases. It will also be necessary to establish respect for the sovereignty of all the countries of the region, avoid intervention in their internal affairs and settle all disputes in a peaceful manner without the use or threat of use of force, and without imposing or threatening the imposition of sanctions.

I take this opportunity to point to the visit made last Thursday, 7 October 2004, by Prime Minister Berlusconi of Italy to brother Muammar Al-Qadhafi, the leader of the Libyan revolution, to inaugurate a pipeline carrying Libyan gas to Europe through Italy.

We believe that this project exemplifies the cooperation that will improve relations in the region. Today's decision by the countries of the European Union to lift the ban on weapons sales to Libya is a further instance of that cooperation.

Terrorism is a serious phenomenon that all parts of the world continue to suffer from. Libya has constantly pointed out the importance of dealing with this widespread phenomenon. We have called for the holding of an international conference to define terrorism, determine its root causes and find the solutions necessary to address it. Libya has signed all 12 international and regional counter-terrorism conventions because it is determined to maintain international peace and security.

With regard to the reform of the working methods of the First Committee, my delegation believes that the reform process must concentrate on the important subject of implementing the unfulfilled commitments and obligations set out in numerous resolutions adopted throughout the decades, particularly those that the major Powers have failed to fulfil. In our view, the best way to reform the Committee would be to do so in the context of overall reform of the main structures of the United Nations.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to reiterate that Libya will cooperate with all parties to bring about general and complete disarmament in order to create a world in which peace, love and stability prevail.

Mr. Rivas (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, Sir, allow me to congratulate you on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee during this session of the General Assembly. My congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau. We are well aware of your country's commitment to the cause of general and complete disarmament, as well as of your personal and professional qualities. We are therefore certain that you, Mr. De Alba, will preside over our meetings with wisdom and balance.

Colombia associates itself with the statement made by the delegation of Brazil on behalf of the countries members of the Rio Group. Nevertheless, we would like to outline and expand upon Colombia's national position with regard to some of the items on the Committee's agenda that are of particular interest to our country.

Allow me first to appeal to the First Committee to recover its political role set out in Articles 11 and 13 of the Charter. The need for that becomes clearer every year, given the paralysis in the Conference on Disarmament, which has been unable to reach agreement on its programme of work for eight years, and given this year's suspension in the Commission on Disarmament owing to a lack of consensus on new agenda items. But, for the Committee to regain the key political role it is called upon to play in the areas of disarmament, non-proliferation and international security, we must renew our support for multilateralism and for an approach of shared responsibility, which would make it possible to move from confrontation to cooperation.

In that connection, my delegation calls for efforts to improve our methods of work to be assessed on their merits and suitability, rather than on the basis of the States or groups of States proposing them. With the care and determination required when dealing with the difficult moments being experienced by the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda, we should be able to reach consensus in order to make headway in that regard.

We must preserve this multilateral forum, which is the only one of its kind still functioning, but we must also reform it. Only in that way can we show that multilateralism can be effective and can meet the major challenges to international peace and security.

Colombia reaffirms its commitment to the cause of general and comprehensive disarmament. Now that terrorism is emerging as a new and very serious threat to international peace and security, we reiterate that only the total elimination of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) will prevent such weapons from falling into the hands of terrorists. Accordingly, we are firmly committed to all multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation instruments, particularly those that govern the quintessential weapons of mass destruction: nuclear weapons.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a highly important legal instrument in this sphere. Colombia signed the Treaty in 1996 and has always acted in accordance with its spirit. In all international forums it has affirmed its full commitment to the Treaty's objective to achieve general and comprehensive disarmament. At the Conferences on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the

Treaty, we have explained the need to identify and promote specific measures for cases such as that of Colombia, where there is a political will to ratify but where insurmountable constitutional and legal difficulties exist. We continue to hope for a solution that will enable us to ratify the Treaty as soon as possible.

Among the First Committee agenda items that have changed considerably this year is the "Relationship between disarmament and development". Upon the request of the General Assembly, a Group of Governmental Experts was established to reappraise the relationship between disarmament and development in the current international context. The Group's report, contained in document A/59/119, emphasizes the central role of security, the costs and consequences of military expenditure, the release of resources for development, the importance of multilateralism and the central role of the United Nations in this connection.

The report observes that, after several consecutive years of reductions in the 1990s, world military expenditure has again begun to rise. In 2003, world military expenditure reached approximately \$900 billion, representing 2.6 per cent of global gross national product; it is expected that this year it will rise to \$950 billion. The contrast between world military expenditure, particularly in high-income countries, and the economic and social underdevelopment and poverty, including extreme poverty, in which the great majority of humanity lives, should suffice to revive interest throughout the world in the issue of the relationship between disarmament and development.

For a country such as Colombia, what is essential is the role that this report gives to security — individually, nationally, regionally and internationally — as regards both disarmament and development. Terrorism and violence, which yearly cause scores of tens of thousands of deaths in our country and cost 5.8 per cent of our gross domestic product, are being addressed through a policy of democratic security that is yielding substantial results. We are aware that only by ensuring the safety and security of our citizens will we be able to plan for economic development and to reallocate for social investment a large part of our resources we now devote to restoring the rule of law throughout our territory.

But our efforts at the national level do not suffice. Beyond greater development assistance and an

international climate more favourable to development financing and to the export of our products, we need greater cooperation in combating the world problem of illegal drugs, which finance violence and terrorism in Colombia. We need tighter controls on the world trade in small and light weapons, which continue to sow death and displacement in Colombia.

There must be a stronger worldwide commitment to cease the production and sale of anti-personnel mines, which kill and mangle our soldiers and our children. That is the only way that we can replace fear and insecurity with peace and development. We are pleased to note the four new ratifications to the Ottawa Convention this year, raising the number of States parties to 143. We stress the urgent need to reach universality on the Convention, making it binding on those who are at present the largest producers of such mines. We condemn the manufacture and indiscriminate use of mines by non-State actors and urge the international community to prevent this. We believe it is essential for international and regional financial institutions to provide the resources necessary to perform the costly and urgent demining that is needed throughout the world.

Mr. Bar (Israel), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

Colombia will speak at greater length on specific points during the thematic debate on the relationship between disarmament and development, on anti-personnel landmines and, particularly, on the illicit trade of small and light weapons, with regard to which my delegation is coordinating this year's draft resolution on reviewing progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action. We submit such a text to the First Committee each year, together with Japan and South Africa, and with the sponsorship of more than 100 other countries.

Mr. Chun (Republic of Korea): My delegation congratulates Ambassador De Alba on his election as Chairman of this important Committee. We look forward to working closely with him over the coming weeks.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) in general and of nuclear weapons in particular remains the gravest threat to global security today. The exposure of the A. Q. Khan proliferation network has awakened us to the real danger of WMDs and their means of delivery falling into the wrong hands. In meeting this challenge, it is imperative to

ensure universal adherence to and compliance with existing disarmament and non-proliferation norms, including the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA) safeguards agreements and additional protocols, the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC).

It is of critical importance to strengthen and supplement the existing nuclear non-proliferation regime based on the NPT. The inherent weaknesses and loopholes of the Treaty must be remedied in order to prevent determined proliferators from developing nuclear weapons capabilities in the guise of ostensibly peaceful nuclear energy programmes.

In that regard, the Republic of Korea recognizes the vital roles that the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Group of Eight (G-8) Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction play in supplementing the global non-proliferation regime. We also welcome and support Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, adopted in April this year. We see Council resolution 1540 (2004) as a meaningful step forward in closing the existing gaps in the international non-proliferation regime by addressing serious concerns about the danger of non-State actors gaining access to WMDs and their means of delivery.

The Republic of Korea attaches great importance to strengthening the compliance and verification mechanisms of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. To that end, we strongly support the universalization of the additional protocol to the safeguards agreement. In February 2004, we became the thirty-ninth country to ratify an Additional Protocol. In accordance with the new safeguards standards set forth by the Additional Protocol, we submitted a comprehensive new declaration to the IAEA on all our nuclear activities, including laboratory-scale scientific research experiments conducted in the past involving the most trivial amounts of nuclear material. We are cooperating fully with the IAEA to achieve the highest standards of nuclear transparency in our country. We urge all those States parties to the NPT that have not yet done so to sign and ratify an additional protocol as soon as possible.

The Republic of Korea underscores the urgency of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). It is particularly important that those States whose ratification is a condition for its entry into force accede to the Treaty without further delay. The conclusion of a fissile material cut-off treaty with an appropriate verification mechanism is another task that is long overdue. The placing of a cap on future and existing stocks of fissile material for nuclear weapons through such a treaty, together with the ban on nuclear testing set forth in the CTBT, will constitute an indispensable building block in achieving our nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament goals. It is imperative to uphold moratoriums on nuclear testing pending the entry into force of the CTBT. Moreover, until a cut-off treaty has entered into force, we urge all relevant States to declare and abide by moratoriums on the production of fissile material used for nuclear weapons.

Those normative efforts towards non-proliferation will work best when they are combined with efforts to address the underlying causes of proliferation through the resolution of regional conflicts and the easing of regional tensions and insecurity.

The NPT rests on a delicate balance among its three pillars: nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Maintaining that balance is vital to the political viability and the vitality of the Treaty. As disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually complementary and reinforcing, the strengthened non-proliferation obligations of non-nuclear-weapon States should be matched by more earnest and good-faith efforts by nuclear-weapon States aimed at complete nuclear disarmament. Moreover, non-proliferation efforts should not be made at the expense of the legitimate right to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We look forward to more in-depth debates on those fundamental issues at the NPT Review Conference to be held in May next year.

The North Korean nuclear issue remains a serious challenge to the peace and security of the Korean peninsula and beyond. The Republic of Korea reaffirms its commitment to the peaceful resolution of that issue through the process of the six-party talks. We look forward to a strategic decision by North Korea to abandon all its nuclear weapons and related programmes — including its uranium enrichment

programme — once and for all and to join the mainstream of a thriving East Asia.

The Republic of Korea is actively engaged in initiatives of like-minded countries aimed at controlling the proliferation of ballistic missiles as a means of delivery for weapons of mass destruction. We hosted the plenary meeting of the Missile Technology Control Regime held last week in Seoul. We fully subscribe to the Hague Code of Conduct as a practical basis for building global norms concerning ballistic-missile-related activities. It was a great disappointment that the second United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on the Issue of Missiles in All its Aspects failed to produce a substantive report despite three sessions of in-depth and substantive discussions this year.

The Republic of Korea supports the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons as an important multilateral response to a threat to human security. It is encouraging to note that the first session of the Open-ended Working Group to negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons had a promising start last June, and we look forward to substantive progress in future sessions. We support tightened control of man-portable air defence systems (MANPADs), and we welcome their inclusion in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as a new subcategory. We hope that the Committee will take concrete action on that issue during its current session.

The Republic of Korea places great value on effective multilateralism in dealing with global disarmament and non-proliferation issues. Yet the performance of the multilateral disarmament machinery has been rather disappointing of late. The Conference on Disarmament has been in limbo for too long, with no prospect of being revived any time soon. This year, the Disarmament Commission failed to adopt an agenda as a basis for starting its deliberations. The third meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 NPT Review Conference was unable to agree on an agenda for the Conference, let alone reach consensus on substantive recommendations. The lamentable state of the major disarmament mechanisms and forums makes the role and the responsibility of the First Committee all the more important. That in turn makes reform of the First Committee an urgent

priority. We support constructive proposals concerning the revitalization of the Committee, and we look forward to achieving a fruitful outcome.

Mr. Nguyen Duy Chien (Viet Nam): I would like to begin by congratulating Ambassador De Alba and the other members of the Bureau of the First Committee on their election. We assure them of the full support and cooperation of the delegation of Viet Nam.

Convinced that general and complete disarmament is a firm guarantee of the development of mankind, Viet Nam has always supported and tried to make its best contribution to all efforts aimed at consolidating commitments to that goal by strengthening and further developing them as required by the outcomes of relevant conferences and meetings and by the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. We regret that the international community's recent efforts in various multilateral disarmament forums such as the Disarmament Commission, the Conference on Disarmament and the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) did not achieve encouraging results. We believe that the current state of disarmament affairs can be rectified only if real political will prevails and if cooperative efforts to overcome existing difficulties and obstacles are renewed and redoubled.

It goes without saying that nuclear weapons pose the most serious threat to international peace and security. Viet Nam has consistently called for the total elimination of nuclear arsenals, and we are committed to closely cooperating with the international community to get rid of such dangerous weapons. In that context, the delegation of Viet Nam wishes to stress once again that the International Court of Justice, in its 8 July 1996 advisory opinion on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, clearly 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 control.

Viet Nam attaches great importance to the strengthening of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. At the 2000 NPT Review Conference, the nuclear-weapon States, in accordance with their obligations under article VI of the NPT, made an unequivocal commitment to totally eliminate

their nuclear arsenals. That and the other commitments made at the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences must be upheld. In that connection, Viet Nam fully supports the proposal of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) to establish, at the 2005 Review Conference, bodies subsidiary to the main committees to deliberate on practical steps towards systematic and progressive efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons and on security assurances, inter alia. It is our sincere hope that the existing divergence of views among States parties on priorities and perspectives concerning the 2005 NPT Review Conference will soon be resolved through a broadly acceptable programme aimed at ensuring its success. Viet Nam fully recognizes the important role of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards in consolidating and enhancing the verification system for the non-proliferation regime.

Assistance to non-nuclear-weapon States in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy constitutes an important obligation under the NPT. We also wish to stress that the NPT confirms the right of countries to access, without discrimination, to research on, and to the production and use of, nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Viet Nam fully realizes the importance of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in strengthening the non-proliferation regime and for nuclear disarmament. As an original signatory of the CTBT, we are in the process of completing necessary procedures for ratifying the Treaty as soon as possible.

The creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones constitutes an important step towards attaining the objective of regional and global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. I wish to reaffirm Viet Nam's position in support of efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones in all regions of the world. Concerning the South-East Asia nuclear-weapon-free zone, Viet Nam welcomes the announcement by China of its readiness to accede to the Protocol annexed to the Treaty of Bangkok and calls upon other nuclear-weapon States to do likewise.

The convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) is imperative, in order to review and assess the implementation of the first special session devoted to disarmament. We are disappointed by the lack of consensus in the Open-ended Working Group established by the General Assembly to consider the

objectives and agenda for SSOD IV, including the possibility of establishing a preparatory committee. We join many other delegations in calling upon the General Assembly to reconvene the Working Group to find practical ways to hold the special session as soon as possible.

Finally, relating to revitalizing the work of the First Committee, we join the NAM working group on disarmament in presenting the NAM common position on those important issues, and hope that through constructive work, the First Committee will be able to make progress in formulating concrete and practical measures to strengthen the regime of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation.

Mrs. Laohaphan (Thailand): I wish to express my sincere congratulations to Ambassador De Alba on his election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I firmly believe that under his guidance and able leadership, the First Committee will head in a more positive direction. My congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau.

As a member of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Thailand wishes to associate itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Myanmar on behalf of ASEAN.

As we meet here today, one year prior to the celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations, it is unfortunate that, despite the continuing efforts we have exerted in the promotion of disarmament and non-proliferation, the world today is not any safer from the scourge of weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons than it was more than half a century ago, when the United Nations was founded.

The Secretary-General's most recent report on the work of the Organization recalls that

“the slow pace of disarmament, violations of non-proliferation commitments, evidence of a clandestine nuclear network and the threat of terrorism ... jeopardize international peace and security and may increase the risk of new instances of unilateral or pre-emptive use of force”. (A/59/I, para. 69)

To prevent those negative developments from further weakening confidence in multilateralism, it is widely felt that a strong regime of compliance is a vital key to the effective functioning of a multilateral system

in that regard. As a developing country, Thailand fully recognizes the difficulties that other developing countries face in fulfilling their obligations. For our part, we stand ready, within our capacity, to work with other developing countries in achieving success in our common endeavour.

Weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) have become the major threat to peace and security. Thailand firmly believes that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the cornerstone of the collective non-proliferation effort and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. In that regard, Thailand urges all nuclear-weapon States to become parties to the NPT, and encourages all NPT parties to implement the Final Document adopted at the 2000 NPT Review Conference with a view to achieving the total elimination of nuclear arsenals. It is also our hope that the discussions that will take place during the upcoming 2005 NPT Review Conference will bring about concrete outcomes which will eventually lead to a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Thailand firmly supports Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which we perceive as a suitable response to the serious threat of WMD proliferation. My delegation is delighted to report that Thailand is in the process of implementing the provisions of the resolution and will be able to submit its first report on the matter within the time frame set by the resolution.

Thailand wishes to call upon all States that have not signed or ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) to do so without delay, in order to bring the Treaty into force. As for Thailand, we are now accelerating our internal process to ratify the Treaty, which we hope we will have done by 2005. In the meantime, we have been working closely with the Preparatory Commission for the CTBT Organization in establishing two monitoring stations in our country. After ratifying the CTBT, Thailand is determined to work even more closely with other concerned parties to develop the CTBT verification regime.

With regard to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), since assuming full membership of the Convention at the beginning of last year, Thailand has played an active role in promoting the universality of the Convention. Working hand in hand with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical

Weapons (OPCW), we co-hosted a regional workshop on the universality of the CWC in March 2003, and a regional workshop on assistance and protection, held in Bangkok in March 2004.

While the world is faced with threats of WMDs, including chemical and biological weapons, the problem of conventional weapons has never faded away. Despite our continued efforts to address the challenges posed by small arms and light weapons, hundreds of thousands of innocent lives are taken away by that scourge each year. My delegation, therefore, supports the establishment and the work of the Open-Ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument on the marking and tracing of such weapons and looks forward to constructive deliberations at the Second Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons, to be held next year.

Thailand sees the merits and admires the work of civil society, including non-governmental organizations, which have contributed greatly in the effort to solve the problem of small arms and light weapons. Those non-profit organizations must be given more opportunities to closely coordinate with Government agencies and international organizations in raising public awareness and continuously campaigning in that arena. As part of the capacity-building exercise in accordance with the Programme of Action, my delegation is pleased to report that Thailand, in collaboration with the United Kingdom, will hold a regional workshop on small arms and light weapons transfers, in January 2005, in Bangkok.

Long before its assumption of the presidency of the Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention, in September 2003, Thailand had put the issue of landmines high on its agenda. As the President of the Fifth Meeting of States Parties, it is incumbent upon Thailand to fully commit itself to ensuring the advancement of the aims and objectives of the Convention, namely mine clearance, victim assistance, stockpile destruction and the universal acceptance of the Convention.

The universalization of the Convention is a very important part of putting an end to the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines, which kill or maim innocent and defenceless civilians. Thailand has been working with like-minded countries and other actors to

highlight the fact that the issue of anti-personnel landmines is not merely a humanitarian issue, but also very much a development issue with tremendous socio-economic implications and other negative consequences for affected countries and regions.

As mine clearance is an extremely arduous undertaking, involving a great deal of manpower and financial resources, concrete efforts and wider participation of the relevant actors are needed. With this in mind, Thailand has been working closely with the Resource Mobilization Task Force linked to the Convention to identify new and potential sources of funding, particularly from international financial institutions. As part of that effort, His Excellency Mr. Surakiart Sathirathai, the Thai Foreign Minister, in his capacity as the President of the Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, met with Mr. James Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank, in Washington, D.C., last month, to discuss possible cooperation between the World Bank and the mine action community. The two sides agreed and underlined that the issue of anti-personnel mines is not simply a humanitarian issue, but also a development issue. Mr. Wolfensohn also reaffirmed the World Bank's full support for mine action.

The First Review Conference of States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention, to be held in Nairobi next month, will be another milestone for those who share the vision of a mine-free world. The Conference will review the progress that has been made since the inception of the Convention and, more important, chart the Convention's future direction. Thailand hopes that the Nairobi Summit will produce a concrete outcome and an action plan that will bring about the eventual elimination of anti-personnel landmines.

Last year, Thailand took on the role of coordinator of draft resolution A/C.1/58/L.43, entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction". When the Assembly took action on it, the draft resolution was widely embraced by Member States, with 153 votes in favour and as many as 145 sponsors. We are grateful to all Member States that sponsored and supported the draft resolution. This year, Thailand is pleased once again to assume the same role. We sincerely hope that this year's draft resolution will receive even a higher level of sponsorship and support from Member States.

My final comment is on the issue of improving the First Committee's working methods. In that regard, my delegation wishes to associate itself with the Non-Aligned Movement's views on resolution 58/41, on improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee, adopted by consensus last year. Thailand supported and joined in sponsoring the resolution, because we believed it would contribute to the broader effort to revitalize the General Assembly. We are fully convinced that it is very timely to discuss this issue, in accordance with resolutions 58/126 and 58/316, on revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. My delegation looks forward to fruitful discussion on this issue during the current session.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to reiterate its full support for the work of the First Committee and to pledge its active participation.

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, allow me to associate myself with the congratulations extended to Ambassador De Alba on his election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I would also like once again to express the support of the delegation of Uzbekistan to you, Sir, and to all the other members of the Bureau.

Uzbekistan shares the view that the global process of disarmament and non-proliferation is now at a turning point. Unfortunately, it has become obvious that the existence of multilateral legal instruments is no longer an obstacle to destructive forces in their desire to make use of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) in order to achieve their criminal goals.

At the beginning of the new century, a marked trend has emerged towards an expansion of the scale of activity of terrorist groups, diversification of their methods and attempts to acquire components of WMDs. We have witnessed a continuing meshing of existing problems with a growing number of new challenges, linked to the increased pace of scientific and technological progress and the expansion of access to information and technology.

It should be acknowledged that, in today's conditions, mechanisms for effectively countering the spread of WMDs are only at a developing stage. In that context, my delegation supports the objectives of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), concerning the prevention of access by non-State actors to WMDs and the means of their delivery, and considers that the

implementation of its provisions could substantially reduce that threat.

Uzbekistan is convinced that, in resolving the pressing problems of global security, there is a need to give top priority to the regional agenda. In our view, only step-by-step progress from regional to global security can in fact make a substantive contribution to ensuring world security and stability. The establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia would be a clear breakthrough in this area. We in Uzbekistan consider this to be a measure that would strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and would reaffirm the timeless nature of the Treaty. This initiative was one of the first joint efforts of the States of Central Asia aimed at establishing a mechanism for regional security.

Here, allow me to express our gratitude to Secretary-General Kofi Annan and to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, for their personal attention to this initiative. We greatly appreciate the cooperation shown to the Central Asian countries by the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, headed by Mr. Tsutomu Shiguri.

We welcome the readiness of the nuclear five to cooperate on this question, and we expect that in the future, as well, they will show a constructive approach as we draw up a consolidated position for the countries of our region.

The Republic of Uzbekistan considers the NPT to be the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and a basis for further action on general and complete disarmament worldwide. Despite the lack of impressive results at the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 NPT Review Conference, we nevertheless are expecting positive results from the work of the Conference, when the necessary decisions and recommendations will be made, thus enabling us to weigh and guide our next steps towards achieving peace and security.

The Chairman returned to the Chair.

Uzbekistan was among the first countries to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). In our view, the importance of the CTBT lies in the fact that its entry into force will be of genuine practical use in resolving problems of prohibiting and preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, in improving our planet's

environment, in strengthening regional and global security and stability and in promoting international cooperation in the nuclear sphere for peaceful purposes. In this context, we once again call upon those countries whose ratification is necessary for the entry into force of the Treaty to act as quickly as possible and, in so doing, contribute to making the process of non-proliferation and the strengthening of effective international control irreversible.

The First Committee is one of the forums in which Member States have an opportunity to engage in an exchange of views and to work together to achieve comprehensive peace and security. We are confident in its ability to adapt in order to counteract new challenges and threats. Here, we call upon all delegations to make every effort to reform the First Committee in order to ensure its effective functioning.

Mr. Al-Khasawneh (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my country's solidarity with sisterly Egypt with regard to the cowardly terrorist attacks perpetrated in the Egyptian cities of Taba and Nuweiba. We hope that almighty God will keep Egypt in peace and we express our heartfelt condolences to all the victims of those acts.

Before my statement, Mr. Chairman, I would like to extend to you and to the other members of the Bureau my congratulations on your election. I am sure that your skills and experience will lead to the success of our work in the First Committee and will help us to achieve the results and attain the goals to which we all aspire. My delegation would also like to express its profound appreciation to Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, and to his Department for their tireless efforts. Here, I would like to emphasize our intention to fully support them so that we can methodically contribute in attaining our important common objective of making our small world safer, stabler and more peaceful.

This year's First Committee session comes at a time when the issue of the reform and revitalization of the work of the Organization is at the forefront of the concerns of all delegations in all Committees. Reforming and rationalizing the work of the General Assembly must undoubtedly extend to the work of the First Committee. In that connection, my delegation would like to join previous speakers in stressing the importance of ensuring that the present reform dialogue includes rationalization of the work of the

First Committee. The methodology and the objectives of rationalizing the Committee's work should be clear and should be based on our sincere shared wish to make our work and that of the Organization more efficient and to provide it with the resources it needs to play its central role in maintaining international peace and security and in realizing the other noble principles and purposes of the Charter.

My delegation is concerned at the continued failure of the Conference on Disarmament, for the seventh year in succession, to produce any substantive results and at the fact that the Disarmament Commission has been unable to adopt its agenda items in accordance with General Assembly resolution 58/67. The importance of the First Committee is undoubtedly increased in the light of the repeated failures of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and the Disarmament Commission in New York. In that connection, my delegation believes that in the process of rationalizing the work of the First Committee we must not allow ourselves to be led — either deliberately or in good faith — into a situation similar to that which is regrettably causing the chronic failure currently being experienced within other disarmament forums.

I would like to underscore my delegation's full support for efforts to reform and rationalize the work of the General Assembly in general, and that of the First Committee in particular, in order to genuinely promote the work of the Committee in the areas of disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, and the maintenance of international peace and security. My delegation hopes that we will all have the political will necessary to continue to enhance international security through efforts towards disarmament and the revitalization of the various disarmament mechanisms.

My delegation looks forward to the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We hope that the positions expressed during that Conference will reflect a continuation of the climate that prevailed during the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference, held in spring 2004 in New York. In that connection, we would like to express our appreciation for the efforts of the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee.

My country understands the clear and imminent danger presented by the proliferation of weapons of

mass destruction and related technologies. We understand from our own experience and our own real suffering the dangers of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the fact that they could fall into the hands of terrorist groups. My country bases its firm position on its voluntary rejection of all forms of terrorism, whatever its causes and origins and by whomsoever it is committed. A few months ago we faced a terrorist conspiracy that would have led to the deaths of thousands of innocent people using weapons of mass destruction. Fortunately, and because of the high efficiency of the Jordanian security authorities, we uncovered and stopped that conspiracy — one of hundreds of such cases that my country has successfully dealt with — because of our firm commitment to confront international terrorism. My country therefore expresses its appreciation for Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which seeks to close the loopholes in other international non-proliferation conventions, which fail to target the possible acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by non-State actors, or entities, or by terrorist groups.

Nevertheless, my delegation would like to underline once again that one of the best safeguards and means of stopping weapons of mass destruction from reaching terrorist groups and non-State actors would be the formulation of a comprehensive international convention on the issue. Such a convention would also keep Security Council resolutions from being used as a replacement for international treaties, which are the only true expression of the collective and comprehensive will of all States.

The ideal safeguard for preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, however, lies in the total elimination of those weapons. I would like to emphasize the importance of this issue, as nuclear weapons are the main scourge we face. My delegation hopes that the 2005 NPT Review Conference will generate serious initiatives to deal with the issue of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, leading to a binding international legal instrument in which all nuclear-weapon States will pledge not to use their nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States.

Additionally, my delegation stresses the need for the next NPT Review Conference to deal with the imbalance that has occurred because of the non-implementation of the resolution on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East,

adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. The NPT was extended indefinitely only after the adoption of that special resolution. The existing imbalance and the fact that that resolution has not been implemented result directly from Israel's refusal to accede to the NPT. We therefore call on Israel to accede to the NPT and to subject its nuclear facilities to the comprehensive safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), opening its facilities for inspection in implementation of the resolution on making the Middle East a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

My country has ratified all the international conventions which prohibit weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. My delegation hopes that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty will enter into force soon.

My delegation also understands the danger posed by small arms and light weapons and the organic relationship between the absence of international legislation and regulations on those weapons on the one hand, and trafficking in them through organized crime and the illegal drug trade on the other. Therefore, my country supports an international convention on the marking and tracing of such weapons.

Mr. Wagaba (Uganda): My delegation wishes to join others who have spoken before us, Sir, in congratulating you upon your election to preside over the work of this Committee during this General Assembly session. Our congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau. We have no doubt that under your guidance the Committee will be able to effectively accomplish its work. We also extend our appreciation to Ambassador Jarmo Sareva for his able stewardship of the Committee during the last General Assembly session. We equally wish to express our thanks to Ambassador Nobuyasu Abe, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his thoughtful remarks at the opening of the Committee's deliberations.

The threat posed by weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), particularly nuclear weapons, remains the greatest challenge to international peace and security. We are disheartened by the continuing lack of tangible progress in the area of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. The failure of the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-

Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to agree on substantive recommendations and an agenda is indicative of the enormous amount of work that still remains to be accomplished in order to advance the agenda of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. We hope that the Review Conference will reiterate and emphasize the umbilical link between non-proliferation and disarmament.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is still not in force due to non-ratification by States that are necessary to operationalize it. My delegation considers that the Treaty is a vital instrument in the nuclear non-proliferation arsenal, and we call upon the concerned States to immediately ratify it. In the meantime, we urge the maintenance of the moratorium on nuclear tests.

Terrorism in its varied forms continues to take its horrific toll in loss of life, maiming and destruction of property around the world. It is the scourge of our time. It is, therefore, more urgent than ever before that weapons of mass destruction should be eliminated before they fall into the hands of mindless terrorists who have, by their actions, demonstrated that they would use them to devastating effect. My delegation, therefore, calls upon all States to ratify or, if they have not yet done so, to accede to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) in order to bring them into universal application.

In the area of conventional weapons, Uganda wishes to underline the devastating effects on the political, economic and social fabric of countries across the globe, particularly developing countries, of the inundation of those countries with small arms and light weapons. Those weapons have wrought havoc and mayhem through their easy availability and indiscriminate use. We, therefore, welcome the work that continues to be carried out with a view to the prevention, combating and eradication of the illicit trade in those weapons. In particular, we welcome the commencement earlier this year of the deliberations of the Open-Ended Working Group on tracing illicit small arms and light weapons. We believe that the outcome of that Working Group's efforts will contribute substantially to the alleviation of the spread of those weapons.

In that regard, let me mention the forthcoming International Conference on the Great Lakes Region

scheduled to take place next month in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. That conference is expected, among other things, to grapple with the problem of the inundation of the region with small arms and light weapons in the hands of non-State actors, resulting from the ending of conflicts in the region. My delegation calls upon the international community not only to support the convening of the conference, but also to extend political and financial support to the resultant programmes aimed at the demobilization, disarmament and resettlement of ex-combatants. Such support will contribute greatly to the consolidation of peace and security in the Great Lakes region.

Global military expenditure, after falling off at the end of the cold war, has resumed its growth, currently by more than 5 per cent annually. Conversely, the flow of official development assistance from developed countries to developing countries is declining steadily. Additionally, developing countries are finding it difficult to enter the markets of industrial economies with their products. That dual assault has exacerbated the conditions of underdevelopment and poverty in the developing countries. Those conditions, in turn, breed insecurity and conflict. There is, therefore, an urgent need to re-examine the relationship between disarmament and development.

My delegation welcomes the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on the relationship between disarmament and development, contained in document A/59/119, and looks forward to its discussion by the Committee.

Finally, Uganda is concerned by the failure by both the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission, two important forums for multilateral disarmament efforts, to undertake any substantive work for lack of agreement, respectively, on a work programme or an agenda. We hope that those bodies will be able to overcome those obstacles without delay and resume their substantive work.

Mr. Del Rosario Ceballos (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): As this is the first time that we are taking the floor in the general debate of the First Committee, I would like to tell you, Sir, how pleased we are that you have been elected to serve as Chairman of our Committee. Through you, we would like also to congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

As the representative of Brazil has already spoken on behalf of the Rio Group, to which we are

honoured to belong, we will simply touch on a few questions regarding which we believe our voice should be heard.

First of all, the phenomenon of terrorism in relatively new forms, respecting neither borders nor international agreements, calls for concerted responses. Accordingly, it is important to strengthen all machinery that can serve as a vehicle for joint effort, because the consequences of terrorism spare no one. Given that, it is urgent that we strengthen all existing instruments relating to arms control in all its dimensions, since no country, however small, is safe from any of the threats which define the dawn of the twenty-first century.

There are other threats, perhaps more subtle, but equally tangible, which are potentially explosive, such as hunger and extreme poverty, and the inability of many States to deal with those threats owing to internal and external pressures. Increased hunger and extreme poverty generate sources of conflict.

The use of nuclear energy is subject to disagreement in international forums and in the relationships among States. A number of conventions regulate its use; one of them concerns the effects on people and the environment that can be caused by the transport of radioactive waste through particularly sensitive areas. The economy of the Dominican Republic largely depends on tourism. In order to ensure progress in that important development area, we must have pure water; if any damage is done to our coasts due to radioactivity, we could experience a significant setback in our very critical current situation. That is a concern shared by all the countries of the Caribbean. We trust that the international community will be properly vigilant in order to ensure implementation of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and International Maritime Organization (IMO) security measures on the transport of radioactive material and dangerous wastes, and that it will ensure that norms complementing those measures are adopted.

My delegation is particularly interested in such matters as: guarantees relating to the pollution of the marine environment; exchange of information on chosen routes; communication of contingency plans in the case of disaster; the commitment to recover material if there is any dumping; decontamination of affected areas; and the establishment of effective

machinery and norms that will establish responsibility in case of damage.

Another area to which my country gives particular importance is the safety and security of the population, and its connection with the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. When we take up that item separately, we will speak of the dangers posed by organized crime and by the new methodology of crime — which no longer follows tradition — including money-laundering, drug trafficking, and kidnapping, among other things.

The present situation in many of our countries is a growing threat even to the stability of some States. Aware of that, the Government of the Dominican Republic is focusing its efforts on the crucial task of improving instruments that will guarantee public safety and security in the spheres of crime prevention, justice and the modernization of the key tool in this area, national police.

For that reason, we would like to give our strong support to the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and to the adoption of an international instrument on tracing such weapons.

As is customary, my country will continue to contribute to the success of the Committee's work. We are convinced that this will help lay the foundation for lasting peace.

Mr. Danesh-Yazdi (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, I seize this opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I am confident that your diplomatic skill is an important asset that will help the Committee achieve a positive outcome this year. I also wish to express my gratitude to Mr. Abe, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his efforts to advance the cause of disarmament within the United Nations system.

The imminent threat and danger of the development and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) remains a real source of concern for the international community. The First Committee bears a solemn responsibility to address those concerns and to continue its efforts to strengthen the global ban against weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons. Universal adherence to the three

main legal instruments banning weapons of mass destruction — the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) — should also be pursued as a top priority within the world's disarmament agenda.

In that context, the failure to agree on a draft document on substantive and procedural aspects of the 2005 NPT Review Conference is disappointing. Indeed, it is a setback in our efforts to realize the objectives defined in the final document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. The reluctance of certain nuclear-weapon States to give their full commitment to the 13 agreed practical steps on nuclear disarmament continues to be the most difficult hurdle for the success of the 2005 NPT Review Conference.

Furthermore, the new plans of one nuclear-weapon State to produce usable mini-nuclear weapons and the allocation of millions of dollars for related research and development have put the whole future of nuclear disarmament at stake. Consequently, possible efforts of the other nuclear-weapon States to maintain the balance by pursuing the same path might trigger a new arms race era and adversely affect the forthcoming 2005 NPT Review Conference, particularly on the issue of negative security assurances.

In the same area, 30 years after the adoption of General Assembly resolution 3263 (XXIX), initially proposed by Iran, on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, no progress has been achieved towards the realization of such a zone because of the intransigent policy of Israel. In defiance of the numerous calls by the international community, through General Assembly resolutions and final documents of NPT Review Conferences, Israel's refusal to respond to concerns about its clandestine nuclear weapons programme remains a major challenge before us.

Moreover, it is unfortunate that the inalienable right of the States parties to the NPT to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy has been denied and hampered. Like other members of the NPT, Iran considers the pursuit and development of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes to be its inalienable right and has thus invested extensive human and material resources in that field. At the same time, as repeatedly stated, nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction have no place in Iran's defence doctrine, not only because of

our commitment to our contractual obligations under the NPT and other relevant conventions, but also, in fact, because of a sober strategic calculation.

My country, as an original State party to the NPT, is determined to realize its right to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, as enshrined in article IV of the Treaty. We are also committed to full cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to ensure that our programme is of a peaceful nature and that our power reactors and relevant components are operated under IAEA safeguards.

In that framework, the Islamic Republic of Iran has opted, as an effective means to enhance confidence, to sign the Additional Protocol to its IAEA safeguard agreement and to implement it voluntarily even before its ratification by our parliament. We are determined to continue our cooperation with the IAEA until all remaining issues are finally resolved.

We welcome and support the ongoing efforts of the international community with regard to the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We also welcome the continuation of negotiations in the Open-Ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, under the chairmanship of Ambassador Thalmann. The Islamic Republic of Iran, as a country affected by the menace of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and especially by its link to drug trafficking, continues to support United Nations initiatives to combat and eradicate that menace. We look forward to the next meeting of the Working Group in January 2005 to pursue further negotiations on such an instrument.

On the issue of missiles in all its aspects, the second Panel of Governmental Experts, notwithstanding hard work by its members and its Chairman to forge consensus, was unable to finalize its report.

That situation prompts us all to work more seriously, and with greater dedication and better preparation to address this issue of high importance for the future. Nevertheless, we should acknowledge that our endeavours in this regard are only the initial stage of a longer process and that they will bear fruit only if

we approach the issue in a spirit of good faith and focused attention. To that end, it is imperative that we redouble our efforts to advance the issue of missiles within the framework of the United Nations for the sake of a better and safer future.

Improving the efficiency of the United Nations disarmament machinery is of great importance. In that context, our efforts should be directed towards achieving the common objectives of disarmament and arms control. It is unfortunate that the Conference on Disarmament, as the sole negotiating multilateral disarmament forum, remains at a stalemate. The seemingly never-ending deadlock over the programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament has prevented that important United Nations body from functioning properly and from continuing to contribute to the legitimate aspirations of the international community with respect to disarmament. We welcome, however, the recent initiatives, albeit limited in scope, to encourage Conference on Disarmament member States to embark upon substantive deliberations.

One of the disappointing events in 2004 was the failure of the Disarmament Commission to finalize its agenda items for a three-year period. While the Commission's mandate is well defined by General Assembly decision 52/492, adopted by consensus, according to which nuclear disarmament should continue to be one of the Commission's agenda items, certain member States have attempted to provide a new interpretation of the General Assembly decision. However, the States of the Non-Aligned Movement, while demonstrating the utmost flexibility in their alternative proposals, believe that nuclear disarmament, as the highest priority of international community, should remain on the agenda of the Disarmament Commission. We are of the view that serious efforts must be made to save the Commission from a repetition of the situation in the Conference on Disarmament.

The effective functioning of the First Committee has received fresh momentum following the General Assembly's adoption of two important resolutions on the revitalization of its methods of work. In that context, the improvement of the methods of work of the First Committee should be seen as an effective instrument to enhance its role in further contributing to peace and security. There are a number of areas in which member States can contribute to the improvement of the methods of work of the

Committee. These include the following: electing the Chairman and other members of the Bureau at least three months before the Committee session in order to allow for focused consultations; holding more interactive debates based on a programme and format elaborated through informal consultations between the Bureau and member States; submission of draft resolutions in a more concise and action-oriented manner, keeping preambular paragraphs to a minimum, where appropriate and practical; biennialization and triennialization of agenda items; and holding more informal consultations, both before and during the Committee's deliberations, for furthering the discussions on draft resolutions already submitted or yet to be submitted to the Committee.

In conclusion, I would like to express our willingness and readiness to work with you, Mr. Chairman, and with other delegations towards fulfilling the important mandate before us.

Mr. Dube (Botswana): Mr. Chairman, allow me to join those who have spoken before me in congratulating you and the other members of the Bureau on your election to lead the First Committee. My delegation is confident, Sir, that your vast experience will serve us well as we grapple with issues of disarmament and international peace and security. I assure you of our complete support and cooperation.

My delegation shares the concerns about the gravity of the circumstances surrounding the deadlock in the disarmament machinery. The failure of the Conference on Disarmament to agree on a programme of work has, in our view, set a very dangerous precedent in the disarmament agenda. We call on the concerned parties to bring the impasse to a speedy conclusion, since the lives of millions across the globe depend on us finding solutions to the world's nuclear issues in order to make progress towards collective security.

The failure of the Conference on Disarmament has also adversely affected the work of the Disarmament Commission and the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We strongly urge those who have impeded progress in pursuit of narrow national interests to rejoin the international community in the fight to rid the globe of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and conventional weapons.

Botswana continues to abide by the principles of the international WMD treaties and conventions to which we are party. To date, we have acceded to the NPT, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We urge all States to abide by the NPT and to comply with all NPT articles, as well as the agreed 13 steps towards nuclear disarmament. Furthermore, we join those who believe that non-nuclear States should have assurances against attack by States possessing nuclear weapons. We therefore urge the Conference on Disarmament to facilitate the move towards a binding international instrument in that regard.

In the absence of an international agreement, the concept of nuclear-weapon-free zones must be vigorously promoted and expanded. We welcome the ratification by Madagascar and Equatorial Guinea of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, the Pelindaba Treaty, which has increased the number of acceding members to 19. We strongly urge those African nations that have yet to sign and ratify the Treaty to do so as soon as possible, so that we may achieve the target of 28 acceding States, required for the Pelindaba Treaty to come into force.

My delegation attaches the utmost importance to the twin issues of small arms and light weapons and anti-personnel landmines. Those two classes of conventional weapons represent a far greater danger to the African region. Millions have been — and continue to be — maimed by these unassuming and inconspicuous weapons. Botswana is party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. We hope that the proceedings of the First Review Conference will significantly benefit from the common African position on anti-personnel landmines recently adopted in New York. Focused and united consideration of the challenges in this area is of the utmost importance if this menace is to be adequately addressed. Botswana, however, feels that it is not enough to deal only with the clearing of mined areas and assistance to victims. We reiterate our call for a total ban on the production, stockpiling, export and use of anti-personnel mines. Those weapons deserve the same level of abhorrence that we reserve for nuclear weapons.

We also subscribe to the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. To that end, we will continue to participate in the Open-ended Working Group's process of negotiating an international instrument to enable States to identify and trace, in a timely and reliable manner, illicit small arms and light weapons.

My delegation has read with some interest the report of the group of governmental experts on the relationship between disarmament and development in the current international context, as well as the future role of the United Nations in this connection.

In particular, we were pleased to see reference made to the importance of investing fewer human and financial resources in military expenditure and more in the ongoing effort to eradicate poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Botswana shares this vision, which has always guided our development planning process.

The report also aptly outlines the nexus between security, disarmament and development. Security is, in fact, described as the third pillar of the disarmament-development relationship. Indeed, a lack of security can be caused by non-military situations such as economic instability, health crises, environmental degradation and resource scarcity, and gross violations of fundamental human rights.

We commend Ambassador Rivas for his tireless efforts as Chairman of the Group and pledge our support for his principled draft resolution on the relationship between disarmament and development.

In conclusion, my delegation looks forward to greater progress in discussions on disarmament and international security in the Committee. We stand ready to make our contribution.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): Mr. Chairman, I am particularly pleased that you are chairing our Committee, and I should like to congratulate you on your election to the chairmanship. Given your skills, we are very, very confident that you will ably guide the Committee's work to a successful conclusion at the end of our deliberations. I wish also to assure you and the Bureau of my full support, and I hope that we can finally deal with the very important issues at the core of this international debate.

The Republic of Angola, which has recently emerged from a protracted conflict, views with great concern the increasing threats to international peace and security posed by the existence of weapons of mass destruction and particularly by nuclear weapons. The number of countries that are capable of producing nuclear weapons and putting into operation nuclear-weapon programmes and the means to deliver them continues to grow — hence the need for a concerted effort at the international level to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Multilateral cooperation is the most appropriate and effective means of preventing trafficking in and the production of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and related material. In that context, Angola warmly commends Libya's decision to discontinue its weapons of mass destruction programmes.

The international instruments approved by the international community to combat the illicit production and traffic of light weapons, ammunition and related material are valuable tools in the quest for peace. Indeed, they address the concerns not only of States but also of peoples, who are the ones who experience and endure, on a daily basis, the direct and cruel effects of such instruments of death, which destroy social and economic infrastructures, disable and kill innocent people, and bring misery, pain and sorrow to millions of persons who have the right to live in peace.

It is an established fact that, in 2001, 1.6 trillion ammunition units were manufactured globally — which means two bullets for each person on the planet. The proliferation of light weapons is an insidious phenomenon — one that has been at the centre of governmental concerns due to its close linkages with deadly civil wars, political destabilization and international organized crime.

The Bamako Declaration, which deals with the African Common Position on the illegal proliferation and traffic of small arms and light weapons, to which Angola has subscribed and fully supports, forms the basis for my Government's actions to combat such damaging practices. A national committee has been established by the Angolan Government, and legal measures have been introduced to sustain and monitor the Government's actions in that domain.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel

Mines and on Their Destruction, known as the Ottawa Convention, is the result of efforts at the international level by States and organizations taken in response to the high number of innocent lives lost every day around the world.

As a State party to the Convention, Angola is firmly engaged in all efforts aimed at the destruction and eradication of these weapons at the national, regional and international levels. We therefore welcome the adoption of an African Common Position on landmines.

Angola, located in the part of the continent most heavily affected by this scourge, has made demining a priority of its national policies and is very grateful to its 20 partners, namely international and national non-governmental organizations involved in the educational network for the prevention of mine-related accidents. Such accidents which have physically disabled more than 150,000 people, for whom concrete projects must be undertaken in order to reintegrate them into society.

In conclusion, 7 million landmines are still planted in Angola. To address this problem, a significant and coordinated effort is absolutely needed by the international community. This issue has top priority for my Government, and we believe that international cooperation should continue to assist in the implementation of our programme to free Angola from the scourge of landmines.

Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia): Let me begin by congratulating you, Sir, on behalf of the Croatian delegation, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. My congratulations go as well to the other members of the Bureau. I assure you of my delegation's full support.

Croatia aligns itself with the statement delivered at our 2nd meeting by the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union. We fully subscribe to its analysis of key threats and challenges and support the proposals for concrete actions to counter them.

Croatia is fully aware of the appeals for shorter statements, in line with the efforts to increase the efficiency of the First Committee and in the broader framework of the revitalization of the General Assembly. We have adopted the policy of distributing complete statements in writing, while orally presenting only the prominent points, most notably during this year's general debate in the General Assembly.

However, we are also receptive to the argument that the First Committee remains the only multilateral forum where all countries, including smaller ones, can once a year present their priorities in the field of disarmament. That is a field resplendent with lofty promises but still lacking adequate implementation. In that respect, I will give a short overview of the most important issues of particular interest to the Croatian delegation and principles whose significance merits their regular repetition until such time as they become universally accepted.

Croatia is convinced that only effective multilateralism based on the rule of law can provide an adequate response to the complex global challenges and threats facing the world today. Weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of terrorists would constitute an unprecedented and potentially destructive situation for humanity as a whole. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to continue to galvanize support for multilateral, legally binding agreements and to enhance their verification mechanisms.

In recent years, Croatia has taken numerous steps in the fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, their components and their means of delivery. Croatia has tightened up its national export legislation and has continued institution-building at the inter-agency level, while at the same time increasing its participation in international and regional non-proliferation efforts.

Croatia supports the Hague Code of Conduct against the Proliferation of Ballistic Missiles and aligns itself with the European Union in exploring the possibility of establishing a relationship between the United Nations and the Code. Furthermore, we recognize the groundbreaking tasks of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), with the goal of curbing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-State actors.

In the same vein, Croatia would like to see concrete results from the upcoming Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in spite of the ineffective preparatory process and the absence of an agreed agenda. Fixing loopholes in existing multilateral regimes has to be complemented by our continued common efforts to ensure their global application.

Croatia has consistently supported the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty

(CTBT). We are pleased that the number of necessary ratifications remaining has decreased to 11, and we urge those that have not yet done so to heed the call of the recent ministerial meeting on the CTBT held in New York to sign and ratify the Treaty as soon as possible. While national moratoriums on nuclear tests are welcome, only a universal mechanism can provide genuine protection from potential devastation caused by nuclear tests.

Croatia is still a mine-affected State, although mine contamination is a gradually decreasing problem in my country. We believe that through the joint efforts of the Government authorities and the numerous hard-working personnel involved in mine action on the ground, together with generous international assistance, Croatia should be free of mines by 2009. I would like to reiterate Croatia's readiness to host, in 2005, the Meeting of the States Parties of the Ottawa Convention, directly following the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World. That will be a unique opportunity to organize, for the first time, a meeting of States parties in South-East Europe, a region that is still contaminated with anti-personnel mines, and which has never had an opportunity to host a mine-related meeting of such high profile. Croatia welcomes the adoption of the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War and expects to complete its ratification procedure by the end of this year.

With respect to small arms and light weapons, I would like to inform members that Croatia is in the final stages of internal procedures to ratify the Firearms Protocol to the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime. That process too should be finalized by the end of this year.

I would like to conclude by adding my voice to those who have consistently recognized the increasingly beneficial role that civil society plays in the field of disarmament. Non-governmental organizations put pressure on individual Governments to take necessary steps towards disarmament. Moreover, their committed and insightful coverage of our deliberations in the international forums, including the First Committee, may give additional impetus to initiatives to break the deadlock and finally move the multilateral disarmament agenda forward.

Mr. Meléndez-Barahona (El Salvador) (spoke in Spanish): It is with great satisfaction that my delegation congratulates you, Sir, on your election to

the chairmanship. We extend our congratulations also to the other members of the Bureau.

We fully associate ourselves with the statement made by the delegation of Brazil on behalf of the Rio Group and with the statement made by the delegation of Chile in support of the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation.

We underline that the goals of international peace, security and stability remain a priority for the international community. Here, El Salvador is no exception, especially in the light of the experience of Central American crises, in particular that of El Salvador in the 1980s. That conflict had grave consequences for the internal order and had international repercussions, including the participation of external actors such as the United Nations in order to find a political solution to the problem.

That priority is regularly stated in declarations and speeches, but in practice, those aspirations and the desire of nations for peace and security tend to fade due to the primacy of the policies and strategic interests of the great and medium-sized Powers. Such policies prevent agreements that would create an international environment conducive to general disarmament and enabling resources for arms to be diverted to the promotion of development and the progress of peoples, in particular less developed peoples.

The situation of which I speak is becoming increasingly difficult, not only because of the persistence of the serious structural problems in the economic, political and social spheres that we have not been able to solve over the years but also because of the rise of new challenges such as transnational organized crime and international terrorism, with its potential threat of the use of arms of mass destruction. Those elements, taken together, further jeopardize the fragile stability of the international order and, because of their global nature, require the elaboration of a new concept and model of security based on collective security and open, democratic and responsible multilateralism.

Without doubt, there is a consensus that the structures of our world Organization provide appropriate negotiating forums for achieving agreements enabling us to make progress in the process of disarmament with respect both to nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction and to conventional

weapons, in particular small arms and light weapons and anti-personnel landmines, which we consider to be an immediate and real threat due to the enormous damage they cause in our societies.

That makes it crucial for weapon-producing and exporting countries not only to adopt more effective and drastic control measures, but also, even more important, to demonstrate political will by taking decisions that will contribute to the achievement of general and complete disarmament.

During this general debate, we have followed the statements made by delegations attentively and have seen considerable agreement regarding the international situation and the dangers, risks and new threats to international peace, security and stability. There is also agreement with respect to actions and situations that reflect or embody unilateral policies that override multilateralism, as well as to national policies that run counter to the common interests, aspirations and goals of humankind, often defying international agreements in favour of a safer world.

The failure to fulfil commitments to make systematic, progressive efforts to implement the NPT; the meagre progress on disarmament measures adopted in 2000; States that defy the non-proliferation regime; the lack of optimism on the formulation of recommendations for the 2005 NPT Review Conference; the fact that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has not come into force; the lack of progress and the continued deadlock in the Disarmament Commission and in the Conference on Disarmament; and the lack of specific, clear agreements on commitments related to the process of total elimination of nuclear arsenals and new arms control measures: all of this suggests a very uncertain future with regard to disarmament, peace and security.

We are firmly convinced that a more secure world for present and future generations can be achieved only by means of compliance with and practical implementation of internationally agreed commitments, the final aim of which must be the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and the enactment of new measures to ensure effective control and reduction of conventional weapons.

Finally, we express our support for any effort to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the work of the United Nations, particularly the work of the First Committee. That is why we support this year's draft

resolution on improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee. Here, we want to make it clear that we draw a distinction between the importance and scope of the objectives of that draft resolution on the one hand, and those of texts relating to progress and results in the implementation of the Committee's decisions. The delegation of El Salvador believes that the efficiency of United Nations disarmament bodies, including the First Committee, must be gauged principally in substantive terms: by the implementation of our resolutions, which requires greater political will on the part of States and greater cooperation and solidarity for achieving disarmament objectives.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the observer of the International Committee of the Red Cross, in conformity with resolution 45/6 of 16 October 1990.

Mr. Paclisanu (International Committee of the Red Cross): This year's First Committee session is taking place in a world which seems ever more preoccupied with the deadly and destructive effects of weapons. That preoccupation relates both to the actual effects we witness in the news each day and to the effects we fear as we learn of the potential for horrific acts of violence made possible by easy access both to weapons and to technologies that can be misused for hostile purposes. Since nearly all aspects of the problem have international ramifications, the First Committee, in our view, has a crucial role to play in developing an agenda for decisive action at the international, regional and national levels. Adequate controls on the development, production, stockpiling, transfer and use of weapons are indispensable for the defence of international humanitarian law, human rights and the protection of civilian populations from acts of terror. The stakes could not be higher or the need for concerted international action more urgent.

The priorities of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) are based on the Agenda for Humanitarian Action adopted by States parties to the Geneva Conventions at the 28th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, held last December. Those priorities include: strengthened controls on arms transfers, especially of small arms and light weapons; the rapid ratification and implementation of the new Protocol to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, on explosive remnants of war; the universalization of the Ottawa

Convention on landmines and a successful outcome for its first review conference, to be held in Nairobi; preventing the misuse of rapid developments in the life sciences for hostile purposes; and ensuring that all States establish internal mechanisms to review the legality of new weapons and methods of warfare.

A huge proportion of the civilian suffering we witness in the field each day, year after year, results from the easy availability of small conventional weapons and ammunition to forces which act with no regard for the norms of international humanitarian law or human rights. Yet all of those weapons originate in States parties to the Geneva Convention and fall into the hands of those who violate those norms through inadequate controls on their transfer. In recognition of those facts, States at the 28th International Conference recognized that their existing responsibility to respect, and to ensure respect, for international humanitarian law entails an obligation to strengthen controls on arms availability and to assess the degree to which a potential recipient is likely to respect such law.

Those commitments should be converted into an intensified implementation of all aspects of the United Nations Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons in advance of the 2005 biennial review meeting, and should result in the strengthening of national laws and policies on arms transfers. Increased attention also needs to be given to demobilization and disarmament in post-conflict situations and to the destruction of the massive volume of surplus weapons currently in circulation. Although the number and variety of initiatives in this field are encouraging, improvement in the circumstances of civilians in zones of tension around the world is not yet evident.

The ICRC encourages States to conclude at the earliest possible time ongoing negotiations on measures which will enable States to effectively trace small arms, light weapons and their ammunition. That is an essential element of responsible arms transfer policies, which will help prevent weapons falling into the hands of those who violate international humanitarian law. We also encourage the First Committee to mandate an expert group to develop proposals for an international system of controls on arms brokers. Successive United Nations reports have documented the role of unscrupulous arms brokers in undermining international efforts to put an end to current violations of international humanitarian law and human rights. The success of efforts to implement

the United Nations Programme of Action and a future system of marking and tracing are complementary, but they may also depend on ensuring that arms brokers are not operating — as is often the case today — outside both national and international law. The ICRC is convinced that States have no time to waste in that regard and that work on brokering should proceed parallel to other efforts.

The human cost of explosive remnants of war grows higher with each successive conflict. The burden of clearing those devices continues to expand far more rapidly than the resources available. In the face of that challenge, the ICRC commends States parties to the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which last November adopted a new Protocol on explosive remnants of war. That Protocol provides a prescription for both preventing and remedying the problems caused by unexploded and abandoned munitions. To the many States that are not yet party to the Convention, the adoption of the Protocol should demonstrate its importance as a forum for addressing pressing humanitarian needs and problems caused by the use of weapons.

The amendment of the Convention's scope of application in 2001 to cover non-international armed conflicts was a crucial step in making the Convention pertinent to the kinds of conflicts which are prevalent today. We urge all States parties to ratify the amendment at the earliest opportunity. In addition, we urge all States which are not yet party to the Convention and to its five Protocols to become parties in 2005 — the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of this important instrument. We also look forward to discussing with delegations the new Protocol on explosive remnants of war, at the briefing to be hosted by the delegation of the Netherlands on 19 October.

The Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World, to be held in late November, will be a crucial moment in the life of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. This first Review Conference can affirm that the Convention is one of the very few success stories in recent multilateral arms control efforts. Since the Convention was signed by political leaders from around the world in 1997, 143 States have become parties. Thirty-seven million anti-personnel mines have been destroyed by States parties; those States have provided more than \$1.2 billion for mine action, and significant clearance operations are

under way in most affected States. Most important, the number of mine victims globally has been reduced — and, in several affected countries, reduced dramatically.

Nonetheless, ensuring that all of the Convention's promises are fulfilled will require increased clearance efforts — as deadlines beginning in 2009 approach — and more attention focused on the lifelong needs of mine victims. In that respect, the ICRC welcomes the recommitment of all States, at the 28th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, to the goal of the global elimination of anti-personnel mines. That is best achieved by the early adherence of non-party States to the Ottawa Convention. We encourage all those who can adhere before the Nairobi Summit to do so. We also urge all States parties to be represented in Nairobi at the highest possible political level.

At the 28th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, States also undertook to pursue a range of efforts to “protect humanity from poisoning and the deliberate spread of disease”. The risk of the hostile use of developments in the life sciences, combined with the lack of agreement at the international level on how to respond to such risks, has the potential to undermine ancient and modern prohibitions against the use of biological and chemical weapons.

In the past year, the ICRC has engaged a wide range of scientific institutions and industry bodies in discussions of the issues raised in its appeal on biotechnology, weapons and humanity. The readiness of most of those we have approached to consider those critical issues and their own responsibilities in the field of prevention has been encouraging.

Together with a number of scientists, the ICRC is also preparing a set of guidelines and points of practice for stakeholders in the life sciences. That will hopefully contribute to the work in 2005 on codes of conduct by the expert group of the States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention. We will also continue our dialogue with States on how and when a ministerial level declaration on preventing the hostile use of advances in the life sciences could support efforts in the context of the Biological Weapons Convention.

As we said at the outset, the need for adequate controls on arms, ammunition and relevant technologies could not be more urgent. In the face of current suffering from armed violence and the

emerging dangers we have described, we invite all States in this forum to rise above their differences, as they did at the 28th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, to build a future in which the dignity of both civilians and combatants, even in warfare, is protected on the basis of existing international humanitarian law.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): Two delegations have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, the number of interventions in exercise of the right of reply for any delegation at a given meeting should be limited to two per item. The first intervention in the exercise of the right of reply should be limited to 10 minutes and the second should be limited to five minutes.

Mr. Ri Jang Gon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I wish to exercise the right of reply with respect to the remarks made by the South Korean delegate.

The threat to peace prevailing on the Korean peninsula comes from outside forces, mainly the United States, which for more than 50 years has been maintaining large numbers of military troops, equipped with nuclear armaments, in South Korea, as well as from the policy in favour of independence pursued by the South Korean authorities. Even at this moment, all kinds of sophisticated war equipment is being deployed in and around the Korean peninsula, targeting the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for preemptive nuclear attacks.

The acute political and military situation prevailing in and around the Korean peninsula proves once again how legitimate it is for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to have built up its strong self-defence military power to prevent war and ensure peace in the Korean peninsula.

As regards uranium enrichment programmes, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, on several occasions, has made it clear that it has no such programme — full stop. My delegation urges South Korea instead to reveal completely its own clandestine nuclear programmes, which have been conducted, for a long time, under the nuclear umbrella of the United States.

Mr. Lew (Republic of Korea): Having listened to what the North Korean representative has just said, we

do not agree with his characterization of the scientific experiments involving nuclear materials recently carried out by a group of scientists in the Republic of Korea.

As we made clear in the statement of our Foreign Minister during the general debate in the General Assembly (see A/59/PV.6), those experiments were isolated laboratory-scale research activities that a few scientists conducted on their own. They had nothing whatever to do with a nuclear weapons programme.

Furthermore, even though the Republic of Korea maintains the sixth largest civil nuclear energy industry in the world, we do not have any enrichment or reprocessing facilities. Despite the compelling economic imperative to reduce our dependence on imported nuclear fuel, we maintain the policy of voluntarily abstaining from the possession of enrichment or reprocessing facilities.

Scientific research for peaceful uses of nuclear energy, as we all know, is a fundamental part of the right guaranteed to all parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons under article IV of that Treaty. Although the experiments in question should have been conducted with the proper authorization of my Government and reported to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in a timely manner, the amount of nuclear material involved is too trivial to have any proliferation relevance.

Moreover, the disclosure of those research activities, resulted from my Government's political determination to accept the new safeguard standards set forth in the Additional Protocol to the IAEA safeguard agreement, under which we declared all of our past nuclear activities, down to the level of scientific experiments involving milligram units, and thus rectified any inadvertent negligence of our reporting obligations. Therefore, there should be no doubt whatsoever left regarding my Government's firm commitment to global non-proliferation norms.

As is well known, the Republic of Korea has been, and will remain, firmly committed to nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We are cooperating fully with the IAEA. We hope that this matter will be cleared up, when the report of the Director General of the IAEA is presented at the upcoming IAEA Board of Governors meeting, in November 2004. We are ready to resolve this issue with full transparency and cooperation.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): Let me briefly recall that it is very important for delegations to respect the new deadline for the submission of draft resolutions — Wednesday, 13 October, at 2 p.m. Delegations in a position to submit draft resolutions ahead of time should do so; that would facilitate the work of translation and distribution.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.