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Fifty-fourth Year

4020th Meeting

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New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Hasmy	(Malaysia)
<i>Members:</i>	Argentina	Mr. Petrella
	Bahrain	Mr. Al Dosari
	Brazil	Mr. Cordeiro
	Canada	Mr. Duval
	China	Mr. Shen Guofang
	France	Mr. Teixeira da Silva
	Gabon	Mr. Dangué Réwaka
	Gambia	Mr. Jagne
	Namibia	Mr. Andjaba
	Netherlands	Mr. van Walsum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Granovsky
	Slovenia	Mr. Türk
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Richmond
	United States of America	Mr. Burleigh

Agenda

Maintenance of peace and security and post-conflict peace-building

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants in a peacekeeping environment

The meeting was resumed at 3.30 p.m.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): The challenge of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian life is one with which the Government of the Republic of Namibia continues to grapple nine years after independence. We can therefore attest that a smooth and early transition to post-conflict peace-building is imperative for any country emerging from conflict. This is a truism, for the disarming and demobilization of ex-combatants does not by itself culminate in peace. For example, in our situation, generations were born in exile and thus had no attachment to the local lifestyle. For others, the long years of absence had placed them out of tune with the Namibian mode of life. Even more serious, most of the ex-combatants had no skills and thus could not be easily absorb into any possible employment. Many were too old to go to regular schools and too young to be persuaded into retirement. Hence, the Namibian Government decided to create a development brigade. In a nutshell, this is a mechanism to resettle, rehabilitate and reintegrate ex-combatants and their families. With the assistance of our private sector, the Government is in the process of addressing the problem, although many constraints remain.

Let me stress that ex-combatants are former enemies who still want to avenge past activities. In addition, while fighting for their cause, former fighters had high hopes that were never wholly realized, resulting in frustrations and sensitivities. Furthermore, due to the nature of the decentralized logistics of irregular forces, weapon caches will be littered all over the country and ex-combatants will have recourse to these weapons if disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes are not properly implemented, coordinated and pursued with determination.

It is in this context that my delegation underscores your initiative, Sir, to hold a much-needed debate on one of the most salient issues of post-conflict peace-building. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration are all but stages in the process of post-conflict peace-building. If and when one stage is ignored, the process is left incomplete and the threat of recurrence of armed conflict is a reality. While conflict is exacerbated by the proliferation of arms, the causes are mostly economic and social in nature. Therefore, to many, armament and mobilization become a source of income, if not survival. It is no coincidence that it is most often the hungry, the illiterate and the destitute who become the easy preys of warlords in various conflicts situations.

Many parts of Africa today are plagued by hunger and malnutrition, yet the proliferation of arms presents a stark contrast. In the draft presidential statement which we shall adopt later today, it is rightly stated that

“Disarmament and demobilization must take place in a secure and safe environment, which will give ex-combatants the confidence to lay down their arms”.

Indeed, we have to ask ourselves what a secure and safe environment entails, because, more often than not, it is the absence of such an environment which creates conflict in the first place. Furthermore, and equally important, a combatant’s confidence evolves around his or her weapons. When he or she is disarmed and demobilized, a state of fear, panic and insecurity creeps in. It is this uncertainty that makes disarmament and demobilization painful, albeit necessary.

In fact, the Secretary-General, in his report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, specifically in post-conflict peace-building, summed it up very well when he said:

“Societies that have emerged from conflict have special needs. To avoid a return to conflict while laying a solid foundation for development, emphasis must be placed on critical priorities such as encouraging reconciliation and demonstrating respect for human rights; fostering political inclusiveness and promoting national unity; ensuring the safe, smooth and early repatriation and resettlement of refugees and displaced persons; reintegrating ex-combatants and others into productive society; curtailing the availability of small arms; and mobilizing the domestic and international resources for reconstruction and economic recovery. Every priority is linked to every other, and success will require a concerted and coordinated effort on all fronts.”[A/52/871, para. 66]

This is very important because, when all members of a society belong, they can all contribute to peace, stability and sustainable development to the benefit of all. The employment of ex-combatants should therefore be addressed in isolation from general employment, as this state of unemployment is fraught with devastating consequences for any country.

Reintegration of ex-combatants cannot be left to the countries involved alone. Not only is it financially

challenging; it has other dimensions which also present constraints. Thus, the international community must seriously assist countries involved in post-conflict peace-building. Indeed, today we are managing the reintegration of our ex-combatants. This would not have been possible without the generous support and assistance of many countries, especially Malaysia. We are thus pleased, Mr. President, that you have taken the initiative to convene this important meeting addressing an area in which your Government has been seriously involved, especially in my country.

Giving employment to ex-combatants is a priority if post-conflict stability is to be achieved. The United Nations office for post-conflict peace-building needs to help fledgling democracies by means of a thorough reintegration of ex-combatants. Furthermore, efforts must be made to address problems, which may result in the re-emergence of conflicts. Premature withdrawal of a peace-keeping force is dangerous because belligerents rearm if presented with a vacuum. An inadequate response by the Security Council and the international community in general can also prolong a conflict, which in turn can render post-conflict peace-building very difficult. Sierra Leone and Angola are strong cases in point. My delegation hails the signing of the peace agreement for Sierra Leone. It is our sincere hope that this agreement will usher in lasting peace for Sierra Leone. However, the difficult task lies ahead. Indeed, the process of national reconciliation may prove hard, but we all hope that the people of Sierra Leone, who have endured the most abhorrent human rights abuses, will rise to the challenge in order to make peace in Sierra Leone a reality.

My delegation concurs with the proposed practical measures to promote the success of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants in a peacekeeping environment as outlined in the draft presidential statement. We also support the proposal for a report by the Secretary-General to the Security Council on this very important issue. It is our strong view that such a report must pay special attention to women and children, among others. Finally, we wish to reiterate that post-conflict peace-building is a multi-dimensional problem which the United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, has to address in a comprehensive and impartial manner if we are to build peace in any post-conflict situation.

The President: I thank the representative of Namibia for his kind reference to my country.

Mr. Shen Guofang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, the Chinese delegation was very pleased this morning to see the Foreign Minister of Malaysia, His Excellency Mr. Syed Hamid Albar, presiding over the Security Council's debate on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants in a peacekeeping environment. We would also like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Frechette, for her statement.

At present, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants has become an important means applied in many United Nations peacekeeping operations. These efforts will contribute to the implementation of peace agreements, the prevention of the recurrence of conflicts and the maintenance of social stability. Like other delegations, we believe that today's open debate in the Council on this issue is both extremely timely and necessary. This situation exists in Africa, Asia and also in Europe and other regions.

It has increasingly affected regional stability and security. The Security Council bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security, and this issue should therefore merit our full attention. Hence, China appreciates the initiative of Malaysia to call for an open debate on this question.

China believes that both in peacekeeping and in post-conflict peace-building, the United Nations should always follow the principles of non-interference in internal affairs and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. The same principles should apply to United Nations activities for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants. When a legitimate Government exists in the country involved, such actions should be taken only with the consent of that Government.

In cases where no legitimate Government exists, measures should be taken only after a peace agreement has already been signed and the conflicting parties have all pledged their support for the measures. Such measures should be carried out strictly in line with the specific Security Council mandate. Moreover, as the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants involve such sensitive issues as a country's armed forces and security, there should be resort to actions in this connection only when they are absolutely necessary, and they should be strictly limited to conflict regions where United Nations peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building activities are being carried out. Otherwise, the

problems will not only not be resolved, but may be further complicated.

The issue of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants is also a very complex one, involving many agencies and departments in various fields. The relevant United Nations bodies should discharge their duties in their respective areas of competence in accordance with their division of labour, and should at the same time strengthen their coordination and cooperation so that their actions will be well orchestrated. In April 1999, the United Nations Disarmament Commission adopted a series of guidelines for disarmament measures in post-conflict situations, including the collection and destruction of weapons and demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants. These guidelines should be observed and implemented.

In the ever-changing international situation, peace, security and development are increasingly and inextricably intertwined. China believes that only when the issue of development is effectively addressed can the root causes of conflict and war be eliminated and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants be realized effectively. This is the case especially in economically disadvantaged areas.

China has always favoured an important role for the United Nations in peacekeeping and post-conflict peacebuilding. To achieve sustainable peace in post-conflict regions, China supports the formulation and implementation of measures for the collection and disposal of weapons and the demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants and believes that a strict monitoring mechanism should be set up to oversee the implementation of these measures.

The President: I thank the representative of China for the kind words he addressed to my Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Duval (Canada) (*spoke in French*): I should like to begin by expressing our gratitude to Deputy Secretary-General Louise Fréchette for her statement to the Council this morning. The Secretary-General's interest in this issue is invaluable, and the statement from the Secretariat shows what deep consideration has been given to the subject under debate.

For Canada, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants in a peacekeeping environment is a key component of the human security dimension of peacekeeping operations. Since it launched a

truly global peacekeeping operation in Namibia 10 years ago, the United Nations has gained extensive experience in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants. We welcome the fact that Namibia is present at the Council table today to share its experience with us. The challenge for the Council today is to translate this experience into clear, concise and comprehensive guidelines which can be applied, as appropriate, to all new peacekeeping missions mandated by it.

We are sure that our debate today will contribute to the achievement of that goal because of the thought and the concerted effort of bodies, agencies and Members of the United Nations — both recipients and contributors — that have gone into it. It is a concerted effort without which words will not be transformed into action.

An effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme should aim to turn all ex-combatants — men, women and, all too often, child soldiers — into productive members of society. That is central to beginning any overall process of reconciliation. But clearly, the conditions favourable for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration do not simply happen: they must be created. Failure in disarmament and demobilization in the short term can result in an immediate relapse into war, just as incomplete reintegration in the medium term often leads to civil unrest, especially armed crimes committed by ex-combatants. A properly planned and implemented programme of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration is an important and effective instrument for the general reconstruction of post-conflict society.

For such a programme to be successful, Canada believes that all three of its components — the disarmament, the demobilization and the reintegration — must be in place at the beginning of a mission, continue throughout the peacekeeping mandate and remain even after the peacekeepers have left.

The success of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes depend upon, among other things, an adequate supply of financial resources at every stage, the political determination of all the parties to the dispute to succeed, and, finally, close coordination between the military, police and civilian components.

Conflict affects all elements of society, and each of these elements must therefore be involved in the return to security. Canada is convinced that effective disarmament,

demobilization and reintegration are dependent on the participation of those parts of the population most affected by the conflict. It should also be emphasized that one of the main guiding principles for any disarmament, demobilization and reintegration mechanism is the enhancement of local, national and even regional capacities through consultation, engagement and active participation in all aspects of the programme. Any political or technical advice provided by the United Nations must respect this principle. We recall the effective cooperation between the United Nations, the Organization of American States and the parties to the conflict in Central America, which allowed the ex-combatants to effect a successful transition.

(spoke in English)

I would like to say a few words in conclusion about the role and responsibilities of the Security Council. It is in the creation of a new peacekeeping mission that the Security Council plays the critical role in ensuring that the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration task is clear. It must be clear to all parties to the conflict, to all peacekeepers — military, police and civilian alike — and to the civilian population. Nothing will dissipate public confidence faster, embolden hardliners on all sides more quickly, or undermine the effectiveness of peacekeepers than if United Nations contingents appear confused or are in disarray as to the rules of the road.

The spread of small arms is a major destabilizing element in a post-conflict situation. Canada firmly believes that, where appropriate, the Council must mandate missions which include provision for the immediate implementation of a comprehensive programme combining both voluntary elements and mandatory measures for short-term disarmament and longer-term weapons management. Likewise, the Council's role cannot stop with mandating disarmament. Demobilization begins where disarmament stops. The Council must recognize that in these situations demobilization can proceed only if the conditions exist for all ex-combatants to feel secure. And, if necessary, the mission must include civilian police monitors, human rights observers and military observers and forces, in order to guarantee that demobilization is undertaken in a safe environment.

Finally, the Council must recognize that reintegration must be addressed if the first phases are to be ultimately successful. Disarmament needs to be tied to the broader process of post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction. Here, respect for the rule of law, for democratic principles and for human rights must underscore the creation of a

secure environment and the promotion of reconciliation. These are the necessary foundations for longer term reconstruction and development if we want them to succeed.

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration will not end with the completion of a peacekeeping mandate. The deployment of a follow-on political mission, mandated by the Security Council, will ensure coordination and continuity. Close liaison with the humanitarian and development communities will be important. Of particular concern to Canada is the large number of child soldiers who are voluntarily or involuntarily involved in many conflicts. Consideration must be given to developing appropriate disarmament, demobilization and reintegration mechanisms to address their especially complex situation.

The experience of the United Nations and other organizations with disarmament, demobilization and the reintegration of ex-combatants in a peacekeeping environment has been reviewed and analyzed. There is now an emerging consensus on both general principles and practical guidelines for effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration planning and implementation in a coherent and comprehensive fashion. It is imperative that the Security Council take advantage of this information when authorizing new peacekeeping missions. To this end, therefore, Canada would suggest that the Secretary-General be requested to submit his recommendations to the Security Council concerning ways and means to promote the full implementation of best practices for the effective planning, implementation and monitoring of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in a peacekeeping environment.

In concluding, I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to express the sincere thanks of the Canadian delegation for the initiative taken by Malaysia in bringing this very important issue before the Security Council. The issue of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants in a peacekeeping environment is a topical one that is likely to be relevant to the deliberations of the Council in the next few months. We commend and thank you, Mr. President, for your efforts in undertaking this most timely debate, and we wholeheartedly support the draft presidential statement.

The President: I thank the representative of Canada for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Finland. I invite her to take a seat at the Council table and to make her statement.

Ms. Korpi (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia — and the associated countries Cyprus and Malta, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland and Norway, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union welcomes the Security Council discussion on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants as timely and pertinent. We highly commend your initiative, Sir. It highlights the growing importance of multidimensional approaches to the solution of today's conflicts. We also welcome your idea that techniques for executing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and the problems associated with them should be studied in depth to help enhance United Nations peacekeeping activities. I also would like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her introduction to this issue from the United Nations point of view.

The international community faces enormous challenges in dealing with the complexity of conflict management today. The nature of the conflicts has become more and more complex since the fall of the bipolar cold-war order. Most of the new conflicts in the 1990s have been of a civil-war type. One of the most disturbing factors is the growing involvement of children in such conflicts. Peacekeeping can no longer be viewed as a distinct and isolated event. Instead, it should be viewed as a part of a wider process, ranging from preventive diplomacy to post-conflict peace-building.

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants have been important parts of a number of peacekeeping operations with a view to strengthening post-conflict peace-building. Such practical disarmament measures have a special relevance to conflicts that are approaching solution, to recently ended conflicts, and, as a consequence, to preventing a given conflict from re-emerging. Without success in this area it is hardly possible to create the stable, just and democratic political environment which in turn is an indispensable precondition for sustainable human, economic and social development.

The United Nations has been successful in resolving a number of conflicts. Many countries formerly in conflict have already gone several years without war, and there is a fair prospect of lasting peace. In these countries the conflict was successfully channelled into a legitimate political process, so that interests no longer had to be pursued by military means. The United Nations provided incentives for former combatants — many of whom had been pressed into service as children and had no other way of life — to demobilize. In other cases the United Nations has not been successful. Both instances merit a thorough evaluation of the lessons learned.

The European Union has played an active role in efforts to combat the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons, and invites all countries to support the aims set out in the joint action that it adopted in December 1998. The previous year, 1997, the European Union adopted a programme for preventing and combating illicit trafficking in conventional arms. The European Union supports a proportionate and integrated approach to security and development. Through its joint action, the European Union has committed itself to promoting the inclusion of provisions for arms collection, control, disposal and/or destruction; for demobilization; and for the integration of ex-combatants into peace agreements between the parties to the conflict and into mandates of peace-support operations where appropriate. The Union will also provide financial and technical assistance to programmes and projects of the United Nations and other organizations, including non-governmental organizations. These undertakings may include, *inter alia*, weapons collection, demobilization and reintegration programmes. The European Union is funding in particular a pilot weapons-collection project in Albania. The project offers community-development assistance in exchange for weapons. The Union is studying proposals for the funding of similar projects elsewhere.

The international community should promote regional and collective approaches to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants. In its first report, the United Nations Panel of Government Experts on Small Arms recommended a set of reduction and prevention measures to combat the destabilizing accumulation of small arms. The adoption by consensus at the United Nations Disarmament Commission in April this year of guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace represents a major step forward. The guidelines provide a valuable tool

which can assist the international community, as well as regions, subregions and countries directly affected. They should also be drawn upon in the design of mandates for future United Nations peacekeeping and preventive operations.

These guidelines contain specific recommendations for the collection, control, disposal and destruction of arms, especially small arms and light weapons, and conversion of military facilities. They address the criteria required for a successful and well-organized programme for the demobilization of combatants, as well as measures needed for their effective integration into civil society.

The European Union looks forward to seeing the results of the work already done by the Lessons Learned Unit of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and encourages the Department to build on these guidelines in the planning management, implementation and monitoring of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in future peacekeeping operations.

The European Union also welcomes the work and the initiatives of the group of interested States. This group supports concrete projects of practical disarmament and serves as a forum for the exchange of information about relevant lessons learned in the field of practical disarmament. The initiative has the support of the Secretary-General.

War-torn societies have great difficulties in offering socially and economically viable alternatives for ex-combatants. The promotion of sustainable employment and skills training should be a priority in integration programmes for former combatants, and international assistance should be made available for this purpose. At the same time, States should be encouraged to reflect in their educational and economic programmes the integration of combatants and to secure domestic resources for such activities, supplemented as appropriate by external support, in order to provide, *inter alia*, for effective follow-up action. The needs of different target groups among the reintegrated combatants, including vulnerable groups such as children, should be identified and options designed for their integration to suit local conditions. The reintegration of child soldiers, representing the next generation, requires special measures, such as medical and psychological treatment, as well as education, housing and other similar measures.

Any reintegration has to be complemented by systems of accountability and accompanied by proper legal

procedures. In this context, lessons learned, for example, in South Africa or in the former Yugoslavia — recently in Bosnia and Herzegovina — could prove useful.

In 1996 the European Union adopted legislation on rehabilitation and reconstruction operations in developing countries. Among the priorities of this regulation is the social reintegration of refugees, displaced persons and demobilized troops. Potential partners can represent international, regional, national, local or community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations and public or private operators alike.

The European Union is especially concerned by the extension of armed conflicts and the huge influx of arms and military equipment into conflict areas in Africa. More than a third of African countries are at present or have recently been involved in conflicts. The European Union, bearing in mind Security Council resolution 1209 (1998) on arms flows in Africa, considers that in the search for a long-term solution to conflicts, high priority should be given to measures that curb arms supplies, the illicit circulation of arms, and the illicit trafficking of gold, diamonds and other lucrative commodities that may finance the arms.

The European Union will actively contribute to the mechanism set up to help in the implementation of the West African moratorium, adopted within the Economic Community of West African States at the initiative of Mali. Its main purpose is to prevent illicit manufacture of and trade in small arms, as well as to make sure that these weapons are collected and put out of use. The Mali initiative is a pioneering project and could serve as an example in other regions with similar problems.

In Central America, the European Union has paid increasing attention to the reintegration of demobilized ex-combatants from both sides of the conflict into the economic and social life of their communities through financing important development programmes in Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua. These programmes have shown very promising results. Ex-combatants who have participated in the reconciliation programmes have turned out to be active promoters of local development processes.

At the Fifteenth San José Ministers of the European Union and Central American countries agreed on the need to step up efforts to increase the participation of citizens in political life in order to further consolidate democracy in Central America. Needless to say, this also includes

former actors of the internal conflict. Ministers also welcomed the European Union Joint Action on small arms and light weapons and underlined their determination to cooperate more closely in this field.

Given the reality of present-day conflicts, the Security Council should consider the following. First, it should give direction to United Nations peace mediation efforts so that disarmament, demobilization and reintegration are properly included in peace agreements. Secondly, the Council should see to it that enabling United Nations resolutions integrate disarmament, demobilization and reintegration as part of the peacekeeping operations mandate, with adequate funding and implementation follow-up. The Security Council should address the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration issue on a regular basis in the context of reviewing peacekeeping operations.

But the key is that disarmament, demobilization and reintegration need a third D: development. Disarming and demobilizing troops and reintegrating ex-combatants cannot be done in a vacuum. The Security Council should endorse what is known as an integrated and proportionate approach to security and development. Perhaps a part of official development assistance should be devoted to the consolidation of peace and reconciliation. Bilateral and multilateral development agencies should direct part of their assistance to the rapid re-establishment of income-earning activities.

Such assistance can help ensure the early success of practical disarmament measures. A key objective must be to allow the administrative capacity and infrastructure that were damaged during the conflict to be rebuilt in a process of conversion from a culture of war to a culture of peace. In the end, it is the parties to a peace agreement who are responsible for its full implementation and who alone can provide the best guarantee for the consolidation of peace and for the essential economic and political regeneration of their societies.

The President: I thank the representative of Finland for her kind words addressed to me and my delegation.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Guatemala. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Estévez-López (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish, first of all, to thank you, on behalf of my delegation, for having convened this open meeting of the Council, thereby affording us an opportunity to give a brief

account of the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants into society in Guatemala.

As is known, on 29 December 1996, the Government of Guatemala concluded with the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace, which brought 36 years of armed conflict in Guatemala to an end. This development created the strategic elements required to carry out the fundamental transformations enabling Guatemala to consolidate its political democracy and comprehensive development within the framework of a multi-ethnic and multicultural society.

The Agreements on the Definitive Ceasefire, on the Basis for the Reincorporation of the URNG into Legality and on the Strengthening of Civilian Power and the Role of the Army in a Democratic Society laid down valuable guidelines. All matters pertaining to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the ex-combatants into civil society.

With the entry into force of the peace agreements, a total of eight camps were set up in five of the departments of the country. Each of those was provided with a container into which long-range weapons were to be deposited as and when the various groups of combatants arrived. These operations were carried out in accordance with the provisions of the agreement. Small arms were not handed over until the process was completed.

For this purpose the Security Council, by its resolution 1094 (1997), adopted on 20 January 1997, approved the dispatch of 155 military observers to participate in the disarmament process. It was to them that the ex-combatants handed over their arms. After being counted and registered, these arms were formally delivered to the Minister of the Interior of Guatemala on 17 May 1997.

The programme, carried out by the special Commission for Reintegration, included 5,200 URNG members, together with their families, totalling some 30,000 persons. The Commission, which officially wound up its work on 8 December 1998, consisted of representatives of the Government, the URNG, the United Nations, the United States Agency for International Development, the European Union and Spain. All these bodies participated in an advisory capacity, while the

United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala did so as an observer.

The Commission succeeded in establishing the best possible conditions for incorporating the URNG members into the political, economic, social and cultural life of the country, within a framework of dignity, security, legal guarantees and the full exercise of their legal rights and duties as citizens, by the dates specified in the agreement on the chronology of the process. Matters such as training and access to land and housing have been part of the socio-economic integration of the ex-combatants.

To complete the picture, I must mention the official registration of the URNG as a political party, which, in alliance with three other political parties, will participate in the general elections to be held on 7 November 1999.

The incorporation of the URNG into the legal process and hence the every day life of the country has been a process that epitomizes the spirit of reconciliation prevailing among Guatemalans. In rural areas, ex-combatants have, in many instances, returned to their places of origin and, as a rule, have been well received, even though other inhabitants of the particular locality may have fought on the opposite side during the conflict.

In the political and social life of urban areas, the presence of the URNG has from the outset been looked upon as something entirely normal, and this, no doubt, has been a factor that has extended and heightened the spirit of pluralism. This is particularly important in a country which, like Guatemala, has for so long suffered from the barriers and prejudices arising from discrimination and intolerance. At the same time, the armed forces has been reduced by about one third and, as with URNG ex-combatants, support has been provided for the integration of these former soldiers into civilian life. The success of the process as a whole is recognized by all the participants and has been achieved without serious criminal acts, threats, obstructive actions or any other type of aggression or violence.

Finally, Guatemalans wish, once again, to thank all those, including of course the members of the Council, who have offered us their support. Guatemalans continue to believe in the possibility of a true process of peace that, despite the problems it has had to face, continues to move forward, transforming our country into a democratic and pluralistic society.

The President: I thank the representative of Guatemala for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of South Africa. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Badenhorst (South Africa): My delegation wishes to commend you, Sir, for initiating this important and timely debate on demobilization, disarmament and reintegration of ex-combatants in a peacekeeping environment. Given the international community's growing concern over the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and, in particular, its impact on the socio-economic development of countries in post-conflict situations, this topic rightfully deserves the focused attention of the Council.

The report on small arms submitted by the Secretary-General rightly identified incomplete disarmament of former combatants and mandates of peacekeeping or post-conflict peace-building operations which did not cover small arms and light weapons disarmament as major causes of the excessive and destabilizing accumulations of these weapons. In this regard, one of the recommendations stemming from the report was that

“consideration should be given to the establishment of a disarmament component in peacekeeping operations undertaken by the United Nations”.
[A/52/298, annex, para. 79 (d)]

After many years of armed conflict in southern Africa, the escalating problem of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons can be related to the availability of vast quantities of these weapons, which recirculated in the region due to incomplete disarmament programmes after peace operations were set up. As a consequence, this renewed proliferation is having a devastating effect on the rebuilding of civil society in the region. Regional peace and democratization initiatives are curtailed by the excessive accumulation of these weapons, especially by criminal groups fuelling crime and violence for their own financial gain.

My Government believes that a political commitment is required to address this issue as a priority. South Africa further believes that addressing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons must be approached in a way that includes arms control and disarmament, post-conflict peace-building, conflict prevention and socio-economic development. Holistic approaches should be adopted to stem this proliferation problem. Regionally, political leaders should commit themselves to solving this problem

through effective regional cooperation and security action, addressing the underlying demand factors such as criminal activities and socio-economic underdevelopment. In addition, strict control should be exercised in the transfer of small arms and light weapons, and where appropriate, surplus stockpiles of small arms and light weapons should be destroyed. With regard to the establishment of a disarmament component in peacekeeping operations undertaken by the United Nations, South Africa believes that the mandates of future peacekeeping operations, as appropriate in specific post-conflict situations, should include weapons collection, disposal and destruction.

To this end, South Africa welcomed the adoption of resolution 1209 (1998), on illicit arms flows to and in Africa. South Africa strongly supports the role of the Security Council in addressing the issue of small arms and light weapons disarmament in the context of peacekeeping operations. It is imperative that the mandate of any future peacekeeping operation should include the implementation of a comprehensive disarmament and arms management programme which will continue into the post-conflict reconstruction phase. Of particular relevance would be the consideration of practical ways to work with States in implementing national, regional or subregional programmes for voluntary weapons collection, disposal and destruction, including the possibility of the establishment of a fund to support such programs. In this regard, resolution 1209 (1998) gives recognition to the important contribution of programmes for voluntary weapons collection, disposal and destruction in specific post-conflict situations in Africa, stating also that the Council should consider including, as appropriate, means to facilitate the successful conduct of such programmes in the mandates of future peacekeeping operations it authorizes in Africa on the basis of recommendations by the Secretary-General.

The South African Government has declared the combating of small arms proliferation as a priority and has implemented a coherent strategy to deal with this problem in all its aspects. This strategy represents an integral and holistic approach, to introduce stricter control measures and eventually to remove the causal factors of small arms proliferation. My Government has further decided to effect disposal via destruction of all State-held, redundant, obsolete, unserviceable and confiscated semi-automatic and automatic weapons of a calibre smaller than 12.7 millimetres. In addition to the destruction of many tons of confiscated and obsolete small arms and ammunition, South Africa will have destroyed by the end of this year more than 260,000 redundant, obsolete, unserviceable and

confiscated small arms of various calibres currently stored by its National Defence Force.

In order to deal with the availability and recirculation of vast quantities of small arms and light weapons in the region, South Africa has entered into agreements with several other southern African States with a view to curbing the trafficking of illegal small arms and ammunition. In this regard, bilateral agreements have been signed between South Africa and Mozambique and between South Africa and Swaziland to address cross-border crime. These agreements led to the launching of the first joint operation, known as Operation Rachel, for the collection and destruction of uncontrolled arms and explosives caches within Mozambique. Four Rachel operations have been launched within Mozambique since 1995, to locate and destroy uncontrolled arms and explosive caches in Mozambique. Huge successes have been achieved in which several tons of arms and explosives have been destroyed.

While international arms control and disarmament initiatives have so far mainly focused on weapons of mass destruction and major categories of conventional arms, the devastation inflicted by the indiscriminate use of small arms and light weapons, especially on the reconstruction of post-conflict societies, can and should no longer be ignored. To this end, the Security Council should play a leading role.

The President: I thank the representative of South Africa for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Bangladesh. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): At the outset, Sir, allow me to convey my warm greetings to you, a dear colleague and a capable representative of your great country. Let me take this opportunity also to convey, through you, to the Foreign Minister of Malaysia our cordial welcome and thanks for the benefit of his guidance at this morning's session.

Bangladesh commends the initiative of the Security Council and its President, Malaysia, for convening this meeting. This gives the States Members of the United Nations an opportunity to come up with ideas on how best the cause of international peace and security can be served and also on how best the issue of post-conflict peace-building — in particular its disarmament,

demobilization and reintegration aspects — can be addressed. Our deliberations will, hopefully, help identify areas that are of interest to the United Nations and the international community.

Bangladesh would like to convey its special appreciation to the Deputy Secretary-General for her very pertinent statement at the start of our debate earlier today. The five points which she identified for the Council's particular attention are extremely important and her views are shared by my delegation.

The international situation today remains fluid. A climate of uncertainty persists. Commitments made in some major areas of international cooperation remain to be fulfilled. The gap between the developed and developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, continues to widen. The problems that derive from poverty and social injustices are in many instances being compounded. Lack of development, poverty and social injustice constitute a deep source of frustration and even a possible cause of new conflicts, with easily available ex-combatants to re-enter situations of violence. The consolidation of peace, security and democracy on a global scale will require a reversal of growing international inequalities. Disputes among nations and within nations, violent conflicts, aggression, foreign occupation and interference in the internal affairs of States continue to frustrate the object of peaceful coexistence of States and peoples.

As we look at the nature of conflicts and social strife that many parts of the world are experiencing today, we notice that inter-State wars and foreign occupation have been on the decline since the end of the cold war. However, intra-State conflicts, social strife, deprivation, abuses of human rights, ethnic aggrandizement and xenophobia continue to pose problems that result in violence and impinge on international peace and security.

In wars and conflicts of today, parties involved quite often take recourse to actions which constitute flagrant violations of human rights and international law, particularly humanitarian laws. The weaker and vulnerable groups of society become easy and innocent victims of conflicts. Abuses of the rights of women and children are most common.

We believe that international peace and security can best be strengthened not by actions of States alone, but by men and women through the inculcation of a culture of peace and non-violence in every human being and in every

sphere of activity. The elements of a culture of peace draw from age-old principles and values which are respected and held in high esteem by all peoples and societies. The objective of a culture of peace is the empowerment of people. It contributes effectively to the overcoming of authoritarian structures and accompanying exploitation through democratic participation. It works against poverty and inequality and promotes development. It celebrates diversity and advances understanding and tolerance. We regard the culture of peace as an effective expedient to minimize and prevent violence and conflict in the present-day world and effectively contribute to the building and strengthening of peace in post-conflict situations.

The maintenance and consolidation of peace and security depend in large measure on favourable conditions for durable peace after a conflict. The transition from peacekeeping to peace-building obviously needs the close attention of the international community. Such a transition, if not properly managed, can seriously undermine every positive peacemaking effort. In fact, we have witnessed societies emerging from a conflict situation to indulge in fresh intra-State or intra-group conflicts. This is an aspect of peace and security and peace-building that cannot be overemphasized.

After a war or conflict, the maintenance of peace and security in a country or a region cannot be ensured in an environment of poverty, hunger and ignorance, economic deprivation and lack of accountability in the use of political power. In a post-conflict situation, the ground remains fertile for the outbreak of fresh conflicts on minor issues or no pretext as armed combatants, who are in most cases not a disciplined force, are prone to involve themselves in conflicts at slight instigation. In a situation like this, the disarmament and reintegration of ex-combatants are essential. However, the ex-combatants should be integrated into the mainstream of society in a way which enables them to get involved in the peace process and contribute to normalizing the situation. In this regard, our experience has been quite positive.

In Bangladesh, the Government negotiated an end to a long-standing problem in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in December 1997 with the signing of a peace accord which met the legitimate concerns of the population of that area. Following the signing of the accord, the ex-combatants disarmed themselves by surrendering their arms to the Government. They are being successfully integrated into society, in particular in the development activities of the

area through administrative councils headed by their leaders.

Let me reiterate in conclusion that Bangladesh is committed to the cause of international peace and security. We have been a major contributor to the peacekeeping and peacemaking efforts of the United Nations and are prepared to work constructively with the Member States in the promotion of the objectives of the United Nations Charter.

The President: I thank the representative of Bangladesh for his kind words addressed to me, my delegation and my Foreign Minister.

The next speaker is the representative of the Republic of Korea. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Lee (Republic of Korea): Allow me to express our warm congratulations and appreciation to you, Mr. President, for having taken the initiative of organizing today's open debate on the important issues of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants in the context of peacekeeping. My delegation welcomes today's meeting as another step forward towards more transparency in the Council's proceedings and also as a timely effort to build on the previous debate of the Council on post-conflict peace-building, held last December.

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration are essential in breaking the cycle of violence and in building lasting peace in conflict areas. We believe that these three elements should be addressed in their entirety and as an integral part of a continuum of peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building activities. Let me highlight the following points to which my Government attaches particular importance.

First of all, our recent experience shows that disarmament, demobilization and reintegration cannot succeed without genuine political cooperation among all the actors involved, including peacekeepers, international mediators and parties to the conflict. Disarmament efforts made by the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) in 1993 and by the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES) in 1996 respectively, are cases in point. In our view, opposite results in these two examples were mainly due to differing levels of political commitment on the part of warring parties. My delegation therefore considers that any final political settlement to a conflict

should include an agreement on specific measures of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and that peacekeepers who carry out such measures should be equipped with the explicit mandate of the Security Council, supported by adequate resources. In this regard, we welcome Security Council resolutions 1208 (1998) and 1209 (1998) adopted last year on African refugee and arms flow problems. These resolutions reflect the importance the Security Council attaches to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration measures in its work. We hope that the Security Council will continue to pay great attention to this issue.

Secondly, my delegation believes that appropriate incentives should be devised to encourage ex-combatants to disarm and demobilize voluntarily. The nature and type of the incentive system should vary depending upon different contexts of conflict situations. Priority should be given to helping disarmed ex-combatants to help themselves in the long term through vocational training and job creation. The international community should also provide affected communities with the necessary financial and technical assistance. With this in mind, my Government contributed \$250,000 to programmes for the demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants in Angola, when we recently served on the Security Council. We also support a more active involvement of international financial institutions in these activities.

In this connection, the international community should pay more attention to the disturbing situation, as witnessed in the Great Lakes region of Africa, where increasing banditry and criminality are being perpetrated by armed ex-combatants. Many former combatants, including child soldiers, whom the Secretary-General has called armies of the losers, are still roaming the area and often threaten the security and civilian character of refugee camps in the region. The Security Council should urgently address this particular problem, as such a situation poses a potential threat to regional peace and stability.

Thirdly, my delegation notes with appreciation the significant achievements in this area made since 1997 by our colleagues in the group of interested States on practical disarmament measures. We welcome the guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament recently adopted by the Disarmament Commission. These guidelines, we hope, will be extensively applied as a framework for the effective implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration activities.

My delegation steadfastly holds the view that a regional or subregional approach should be explored to stem the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. In this connection, we commend the efforts made respectively by the European Union, through the recent adoption of its joint action, and by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) through the declaration of a moratorium on the importation, exportation and manufacture of light weapons in West Africa. We hope that similar initiatives can be taken in other regions as well.

Before concluding, my delegation notes with satisfaction two successful projects in this field conducted with the assistance of members of the group of interested States. A workshop held in Guatemala City last November is one case in point, where the experiences of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Colombia in weapons collection and integration of former combatants were discussed. We hope that the lessons learned from the experiences of those countries will be fully shared with other countries affected by civil strife. Another case in point is the pilot weapons collection project in the Albanian district of Gramsh launched last January. The innovative idea of providing development assistance as a reward for the voluntary surrender of weapons and ammunition from the local population deserves further study.

Today's open debate provides us with a valuable opportunity to increase common awareness of this important issue. We heard today a number of constructive suggestions made by both members and non-members of the Security Council. We hope that they will help the Council and the United Nations system as a whole to better address this important issue and to take further action as necessary.

The President: I thank the representative of the Republic of Korea for the kind words he addressed to me and my delegation.

The next speaker is the representative of Japan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): I would like to begin by extending my sincere congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of July. I am confident that with the benefit of your wise leadership the Council's consideration of today's agenda item — disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants in a peacekeeping environment — will be most fruitful. The Government of

Japan welcomes the timely decision of the Security Council to focus specifically on this issue, and appreciates the initiative of Malaysia that resulted in the convening of today's meeting.

As the body with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council has, since the end of the cold war, often been called upon to respond to regional conflicts by launching a peacekeeping operation. Experience has taught us that in responding to regional conflicts, it is necessary to address the fragile post-conflict environment in all its aspects. The success of these operations is to a great extent dependent upon the smooth implementation of measures aimed at the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants. Indeed, it may be said that the ultimate objective of such a comprehensive approach is the disarming, demobilization, and reintegration of ex-combatants.

Today I would like to touch upon the question of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in terms of the following five aspects.

First, it is important to consider disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in a coordinated and consistent manner. Until now, different aspects of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration have been addressed in various forums. The issue of small arms, for instance, has been discussed in the General Assembly and other forums. The Government of Japan has taken several initiatives with a view to coordinating those various efforts. It also sponsored General Assembly resolution 50/70 B which asked the Secretary-General to establish a group of governmental experts on small arms. Ambassador Mitsuro Donowaki, Special Assistant to the Foreign Minister of Japan, serves as the Chairman of that Group. In addition, and supplementing the work of the expert group, Japan hosted the Tokyo Workshop on Small Arms, to which it invited experts from the Group, as well as delegations from interested States, the Department for Disarmament Affairs and non-governmental organizations.

Secondly, illicit arms transfers to and within a region should be controlled in order to prevent the resumption of hostilities. Since this is a task that requires the full cooperation of the international community, the General Assembly at its fifty-third session adopted resolution 77 E, requesting the Secretary-General to submit his recommendations to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session in preparation for an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects, to be

held not later than the year 2001. The success of that conference is eagerly anticipated by the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms. In this context, during its presidency of the Security Council last year, Japan coordinated the efforts of the working group on illicit arms flows to and in Africa, whose results were reflected in Security Council resolution 1209 (1998). We sincerely hope that these efforts will be effectively utilized in preparing for the 2001 United Nations conference on arms flows.

The third point, and one whose importance to sustainable peace cannot be overstated, is that of development. Recognizing that one of the causes of social instability is often extreme poverty, Japan hosted the First and Second Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), in 1993 and 1998, respectively. It is hoped that the TICAD process will underscore the importance of conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction in restoring stability throughout society, which is a prerequisite for development.

The fourth point to bear in mind when addressing the issue of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration is the importance of coordination among international organizations and non-governmental organizations. Inasmuch as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration is a comparatively new area of endeavour for the United Nations and its related bodies, the input and cooperation of interested States and non-governmental organizations are especially important. In this connection, Japan held an open symposium to stress the importance of cooperation among international organizations and non-governmental organizations under the theme of civil society and small arms on the occasion of the Tokyo Workshop on Small Arms.

Fifthly, it is important to establish an institutional memory so that past experience will be utilized to ensure the maximum effectiveness of future peacekeeping operations. Towards this end, the Government of Japan funded a study on lessons learned from disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and a workshop in Geneva held by the Lessons Learned Unit. Through these and other studies, we hope to devise a strategy for implementing principles and guidelines for future peacekeeping operations which will have a major bearing on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

In concluding, let me reiterate the point that individual disarmament, demobilization and reintegration measures, such as those I have just mentioned, while important in

themselves, must also be undertaken as part of a comprehensive approach to post-conflict peacekeeping and peace-building. I sincerely hope that this important subject will continue to be addressed by the United Nations as a whole. The Government of Japan, for its part, will continue to make every possible effort to contribute to that endeavour.

The President: I thank the representative of Japan for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Mozambique. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Santos (Mozambique): I would like to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and on the excellent manner in which you are conducting the affairs of the Council. Allow me also to pay a special tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Jagne of the Gambia, for the excellent work he did during the difficult month of June.

I would also like to express our appreciation to the Deputy Secretary-General for her statement and for her presence here today.

We commend your initiative, Mr. President, in introducing today's topic to the agenda of the Council. We salute members of the Council for agreeing to give this issue the priority it deserves. Indeed, not only is the theme of the maintenance of peace and security and post-conflict peace-building and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants in a peacekeeping environment relevant and timely, but it also, and perhaps more important, falls under the core competency of the Security Council.

We therefore welcome the opportunity to share our views and lend our modest contribution to the debate, in the hope that this body will play a more effective role in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Recent experience reminds us that the maintenance of international peace and security in post-conflict situations requires the timely adoption and implementation of adequate measures to consolidate peace and prevent the re-emergence of conflict. In this regard, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants should be given the highest priority for, without them, peace will be in constant jeopardy.

Mozambique is today considered a success story in United Nations peacekeeping history. While we take great pride in the achievements made by the Mozambican people with the invaluable assistance of the international community, we are conscious of the challenges that lie ahead in our war-torn society.

The 1992 General Peace Agreement for Mozambique, signed in Rome, provided for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. Indeed, mechanisms were set up to deal with these delicate areas. As a result, the cantonment of combatants and their disarmament and demobilization was carried out without major incident. The Reintegration Commission provided for under the Peace Agreement had the mandate to deal with the immediate needs of the combatants. Clearly, providing combatants with cash payments for a few months following the cessation of hostilities will not suffice. They need continued assistance and they need to be empowered to generate their own means survival and to lead normal lives as working people so that going back to war will no longer be a viable option. The inclusion of these provisions and mechanisms in the Peace Agreement had a very positive impact in the consolidation of peace in Mozambique.

My Government has spared no effort to address the problem of the reintegration of former combatants, including those who fought for the independence of the country. As Ambassador Greenstock mentioned this morning, different strategies were experimented with, ranging from vocational training to job placement and self-employment. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has supported those efforts by the Government and has studied the impact those programmes. Support from cooperating partners has been vital in this process.

Reintegration means also reconciling combatants with communities that were victim of atrocities. Thus it requires the participation of communities and civil-society organizations in the process. And reintegration has to be such that former combatants will identify more with the community than with their former roles as fighters. At some point they should cease to be considered a special group of citizens, but rather be part of the communities they live in.

Of particular importance in this regard is the delicate issue of the demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers. While Governments can be held accountable for the use of children as soldiers it is often difficult to induce change in rebel groups and to have them admit that they make use of children. The magnitude of the problem cannot be overemphasized. In the African continent alone, about

120,000 children under 18 years of age are currently participating in armed conflicts.

Therefore, there is a need to recognize and highlight the specific difficulties encountered when disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating child soldiers. Traumatized children will find it difficult to reintegrate into their communities or even into new communities. They need long-term measures emphasizing education, family reunification and psycho-social support. The United Nations Children's Fund has gathered experience in this field and can assist in developing guiding principles for action. The Graça Machel study, documents A/51/306 and A/51/306/Add.1, offers useful recommendations in this regard. The follow-up actions by the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Olara Otunnu, are equally relevant, and the briefs given to the Council by Ambassador Otunnu should be continued and be more action-oriented.

One important aspect to be taken into account is the total disarmament of combatants: making sure that all weapons are handed over. Seven years after the General Peace Agreement, the Mozambican authorities, in coordination with neighbouring South Africa, have been discovering caches of weapons that were supposed to have been handed over at the time of demobilization. Therefore, provisions in agreements will not be sufficient; close monitoring of the process will be required in the mandate of peacekeeping missions.

The presence of large numbers of small weapons in unlawful hands will remain a constant danger to peace and stability in post-conflict areas. Regional and international efforts under way in this area should be strengthened and expedited. Practical disarmament measures should be pursued whenever and wherever possible. The Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, of which I am privileged to be a part, has produced valuable recommendations and is currently discussing their implementation and updating. The subsequent reports by the Secretary-General should merit due consideration by the Security Council.

The first meeting of States parties to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, held in Maputo, Mozambique only two months ago, once again highlighted the impact of landmines in post-conflict areas. While this problem cannot be completely solved by peacekeeping missions, mission mandates should include provisions for assisting

local authorities in building the necessary capacities to deal with the different aspects of the problem, including mine awareness, victim assistance, stockpile destruction and technology for mine action.

The United Nations has accumulated a wealth of experience, and important lessons can be learned. We should therefore use our innovative capacity to develop concrete guidelines and a framework for action in future peacekeeping operations. The usefulness of today's debate will be judged to large extent by the level of improvements that the Security Council will be able to introduce. The resources committed to peacekeeping operations and to post-conflict peace-building also reflect the level of commitment to finding durable solutions.

We recognize that solutions to these problems lie primarily in the willingness of the parties to participate and in the political will to reach a positive conclusion. But, as the experience in Mozambique and elsewhere has shown, this readiness has to be backed by the international community if it is to last. And the end of a peacekeeping operation should not mean the end of international community support.

An integrated approach to these issues will certainly be required so that post-conflict peace-building can lead to lasting peace and stability. The entire United Nations system is called upon to play a role in devising the most effective strategies that will ensure future success. The expectations are high, and the Security Council bears great responsibility as provided in the Charter of the United Nations.

We look forward to the outcome of this meeting and to the deliberations and actions that will follow.

The President: I thank the representative of Mozambique for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Australia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Smith (Australia): Australia welcomes the opportunity to participate in an open debate in the Security Council on this important issue. We congratulate you, Sir, and the delegation of Malaysia on this initiative.

We would like to make some observations about the challenges created by the problem of regions emerging from conflict, drawing on Australia's own practical

experience in the aftermath of the conflict on the island of Bougainville. Many of these observations serve to illustrate the conclusions and observations in the informal paper prepared for this debate. They are themes that have been cited by other speakers today.

Our experience supports the obvious conclusion that there are no simple solutions to the problems posed by former combatants. The challenges are multifaceted and involve a range of economic, social, educational, judicial and disarmament issues — all of which must be addressed in an integrated, coordinated way. They include the need for effective demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants into productive civilian life; post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation in stable and secure environments; reform and capacity-building of police, judicial and penal systems; and promotion of respect for international humanitarian law, including with regard to the use and transfer of small arms.

In the case of Bougainville, the first real challenge facing local leaders has been to re-establish civil society and a viable local economy. Working with Bougainvilleans and the Papua New Guinea Government, Australia has been pleased to be able to help address both the immediate and the long-term needs of ex-combatants. Rehabilitating social services, restoring much-needed employment opportunities and addressing unresolved social issues of weapons disposal, alcohol abuse, family violence and ongoing trauma are examples of areas where initiatives are being taken.

Peace on Bougainville has allowed the re-emergence of a fledgling local economy and some early employment opportunities. These must continue to be nurtured and expanded. The Australian Government, through its international aid agency, encourages the participation and employment of local Bougainvilleans, including ex-combatants, in its aid projects. More than 4,000 people have been employed to date, and this number will increase as projects get under way to rehabilitate Bougainville's road and bridge infrastructure and its once highly productive agriculture sector, and to re-establish services in health and education.

To date, the absence of a highly skilled workforce has usually limited the employment of local people to manual labouring. Many of the young ex-combatants in particular have received very little education and training. In recognition of this, priority is being given to the rebuilding of education facilities in Bougainville. Two major high schools are being rebuilt, and the construction

of Bougainville's only vocational training centre has just been completed. Working alongside Bougainville communities, the Australian Government has also rebuilt some 30 double classrooms for village schools.

Many ex-combatants are severely traumatized by their experience during years of armed conflict. This challenge is also being addressed through collaborative efforts. We have encouraged and funded the work of local non-governmental organizations to train trauma counsellors, encourage the reintegration of ex-combatants and deal with ongoing social problems.

We are also working closely with the New Zealand and Papua New Guinea Governments to develop a policing project, which will ultimately see 200 Bougainvilleans trained as community police. Some 30 local men and women have already benefitted from an earlier project to train them as community police. A number of the beneficiaries are unemployed Bougainvillean youth. This is an important measure. In the absence of civil authority, a number of local law-and-order bodies have emerged with former rebels and local chiefs. In some instances, this has led to summary justice and an approach to law and order that is subject to no constitutional or legal control.

The presence of the Peace Monitoring Group, a multinational force led by Australia and comprising approximately 300 personnel from Australia, Fiji, New Zealand and Vanuatu, working cooperatively with the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB) have both been crucial in managing the problem of disenfranchised combatants. The Peace Monitoring Group and UNPOB are both neutral, unarmed bodies mandated to monitor the peace and report to the parties. Their collective presence has provided a critical climate of security for Bougainvilleans, and has instilled in them the confidence to work through their differences. Without their presence, the threat to the Bougainville peace process posed by large numbers of ex-combatants would certainly have been more serious.

The United Nations Political Office is also playing an important role in weapons disposal on the island. This is a key issue in the debate on Bougainville's political future. In early June 1999, the Peace Process Consultative Committee, a forum chaired by UNPOB and through which the parties can discuss peace-process-related issues and make recommendations to leaders, authorized UNPOB to develop a plan for weapons disposal, in conjunction with the key parties. The parties' agreement to such a plan will not only be significant in terms of reducing the number of weapons

on the island and their threat to the peace process, but will also be a very important confidence-building measure in the context of negotiations over Bougainville's political future.

I will conclude with a brief comment on the problem of small arms. Demobilization, weapons disposal and peace-monitoring programmes, such as those in which we have been involved in Bougainville, can and do play a key role in managing the problems caused in many other parts of the world by the proliferation and misuse of small arms. The small arms problem is a complex one, covering many issues: disarmament, human rights, legal, good governance and law and order issues, among others. But an effective response can come over time through enhanced national and regional responses, which in turn can serve as building blocks for an effective international response. This approach has helped guide the Australian Government in the development of its own policy on the small arms issue.

We offer these observations in the hope that they contribute in a practical way to this important debate. These are complex issues and clearly they do warrant further study, particularly with a focus on how our objectives can practically be built in to United Nations peacekeeping, post-conflict peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction activities. In this context, we welcome the proposal for further work on the issue assisted by a report from the Secretary-General.

The President: I thank the representative of Australia for his kind words addressed to me and my delegation.

The next speaker is the representative of Indonesia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Effendi (Indonesia): At the outset, my delegation would like to extend its sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of July. We have every confidence that, under your wise and able guidance, the issues before the Council will be brought to a successful conclusion. Allow me also to extend felicitations to your predecessor, Ambassador Jagne, the Permanent Representative of the Gambia, for his skilful stewardship of the Council's activities last month.

Mr. President, my delegation wishes to commend your delegation for its excellent initiative on considering

in the Security Council the issue of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants. We believe that it is timely and that it will be beneficial to the international community.

The role of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants is admittedly not only complex for the parties involved; it is also complex because of its international ramifications. It calls for the factions concerned to agree to the terms of a peace agreement and to give up the use of force, which is essential for the successful launching of this three-pronged approach which, as experience has shown, is interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Meanwhile, the international dimensions of these activities must focus on the role of the United Nations and of regional organizations in their respective spheres of competence. Their involvement at various stages of these complex operations has had a salutary impact in bringing a measure of stability, which has eventually led in some instances to the restoration of normalcy in troubled areas.

Moreover, the handing over of weapons to competent authorities and the ensuing demobilization have positive implications for security in post-conflict situations, especially in ensuring and advancing the peace process. We all recognize that in endeavours to create an atmosphere conducive to security, it will be necessary to disarm combatants and to collect armaments from civilians within the framework of an overall weapons-collection programme in order to promote an environment where weapons are no longer perceived as necessary.

A further step that must be taken is to address the question of adequate financing, which is a *sine qua non* for ensuring the implementation of comprehensive programmes of reintegration and the reconstruction of the damaged economy. The distribution of financial assistance on a fair basis between the ex-combatants and the general population, many of whom also face extreme economic hardship, will in turn prevent another conflict caused by the disgruntled parties.

In this context, it is important to note that during the brief period of only two years, from 1995 to 1997, 300,000 children under the age of 18 were used as soldiers in conflicts around the world. Their future is at stake, especially when adequate opportunities in education to prepare them for careers and counselling to overcome the trauma of hostilities are limited. It is self-evident that more needs to be done to alleviate their suffering and to ensure them a rightful place in their societies through adequate support programmes.

Another important issue to confront is the problem of curbing the flow of arms through clandestine means after disarmament is achieved, as they will have a profoundly negative impact on security and portend a potentially explosive situation, leading ultimately to destabilization. This calls for determined and coordinated efforts at the national, regional and global levels to curb illicit transfers of arms. The need to accommodate approaches in response to changes is also a welcome step. At the same time, care should be taken to conform to the basic principles enshrined in the Charter.

By way of concluding, Sir, I wish to reiterate my delegation's appreciation for your excellent initiative on this matter, which is very important to the international community.

The President: I thank the representative of Indonesia for his kind words addressed to me and my delegation.

The next speaker is the representative of New Zealand. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Hughes (New Zealand): May I start, Mr. President, by saying how pleased my delegation is to have this opportunity to participate in an open debate of the Security Council on this very important topic. I would like to congratulate you on your initiative in calling this meeting.

We have prepared our statement today drawing largely on our national experience in United Nations peacekeeping operations, such as the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) and the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ). I must say that I found the statement made earlier by the representative of Mozambique particularly valuable. We have also drawn from our participation in regional arrangements, such as the Peace Monitoring Group in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, where the United Nations is also playing a key role in the peace process through its Political Office (UNPOB), and which was, of course, the subject of my Australian colleague's statement earlier.

It seems to us that, in designing a framework for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants, three factors are essential. These are flexibility, building capacity and sustainability.

With respect to flexibility, we suggest it is essential to recognize that different circumstances warrant and should be accorded different approaches. For instance, where a society has been severely disrupted by civil war or ethnic conflict to the point that its domestic institutions have collapsed, the role of the United Nations and other external agencies is likely to need to be extensive. In other situations, however, where an established and internationally recognized Government remains in place after a period of conflict, the role of outsiders, including the United Nations, is likely to be more limited. A rigid conceptual framework should therefore be avoided.

As for building capacity, there is the need to provide, at the level of the individual, education, training and information regarding options which may be available to ex-combatants to help them deal with problems encountered on demobilization. At the national level, it should be an overriding concern to develop as soon as possible a national capability in demobilization and reintegration activities so as to reduce dependence on external inputs.

Sustainability, of course, implies that initiatives are designed with a view to avoiding a return to conflict. It also means promoting growth and development over the medium to long term and ensuring equitable access to the benefits of such growth.

The successful implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants in a peacekeeping environment depends a good deal on the provisions made in the agreement ending the conflict in question, as a number of others have pointed out today. Activities in support of these processes should, as far as possible, be carefully planned and designed from the very beginning. In particular, this means early consultation with the parties to the conflict. As for external resources, we can only agree with the observation made by several speakers today that it is essential that our collective peacekeeping efforts enjoy a more secure financial basis than exists at present.

One of the key lessons learned from New Zealand's experience in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, is the need to give ownership of the peace settlement and subsequent disarmament and reconstruction mechanisms to the parties concerned. Along with Australia, Fiji and Vanuatu, we continue to provide personnel to the Peace Monitoring Group and to take part in regular peace process consultative meetings. However, our own role is essentially peripheral to that played by the political leaders themselves.

Reintegration nevertheless remains a complex and expensive activity. It is particularly difficult to implement successfully in economies which are stagnant or severely disrupted as a result of conflict. Ideally, emphasis should also be placed on programmes which promote reconciliation at the same time, for example, by recruiting former combatants to work side by side in a new police force, where this is feasible.

In regard to Bougainville, New Zealand is continuing to provide, by means of official development assistance, support for the peace process, including the restoration of civil authority and a variety of vocational training programmes with a focus on reintegration. It is pleasing to report that we have found it possible to offer training programmes in which former protagonists learn side by side.

A further essential building block is the promotion of good governance. We are attracted to the definition set out by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) that good governance is

“the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels in a manner that is participatory, transparent and accountable”.

Good governance, in effect, means that priorities are based on a broad consensus in society, while at the same time the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable are heard.

Finally, we believe it is useful to recall the words of former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali when he wrote in *An Agenda for Peace* that

“Preventative diplomacy is to avoid a crisis; post-conflict peace-building is to prevent a recurrence”.
[A/47/277, para. 57]

This concise statement captures very well the need to take adequate steps to deal with problems which, if left unresolved, could lead to a return to armed conflict. It also underlines clearly the need for due weight to be given to the reintegration aspect of the tripartite topic we are discussing today. For, without a successful reintegration effort, the dividends of disarmament and demobilization may prove short-lived.

The President: I thank the representative of New Zealand for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Croatia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Šimonović (Croatia): I welcome the opportunity to greet you, Sir, as the President of the Security Council for the month of July. Your initiative, which led to today's open debate on the centrality of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants to the restoration of stability and sustainable peace, represents a natural extension of Malaysia's extensive record in the fields of international peacekeeping and peace-building. As a country with direct recent experience in matters that we are discussing today, we wish to make a specific contribution concerning elements that might be incorporated into future planning and execution of United Nations-led operations and missions of the regional security organizations.

It is our pleasure to participate in the debate and share our views on a comprehensive approach to the questions of peacekeeping and peace-building. We are aware that different requirements embedded in military management and bureaucratic governance in United Nations missions call for distinct categories and tasks of peacekeeping and peace-building efforts. Nevertheless, all of these efforts comprise the same continuum on the road towards a lasting peace.

The objective of restoring and maintaining a lasting peace should not fall victim to conceptual or bureaucratic compartmentalization, its value being too large and its opposite too costly. If the Security Council indeed wishes to enhance the effectiveness, scope and reach of its Charter-mandated responsibility to maintain international peace and security, it should not shy away from improving upon old or searching for new means to fit new realities in a comprehensive manner.

In this regard, Croatia salutes the initiative to move away from a piecemeal approach to what it takes in today's world and age to enhance the prospects for sustainable peace. The quest for developing general principles and guidelines for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants in a peacekeeping and peace-building environment is timely, and fully consistent with existing efforts of the Secretary-General. It is also consistent with the political will of a number of Member States, as evidenced best by today's turnout of speakers.

Having hosted five distinct United Nations peacekeeping operations in the last eight years, Croatia has

gained experience that entitles it to reflect upon the lessons learned in peacekeeping and peace-building. On this occasion, I will not comment on those operations on Croatia's soil that did not succeed. Rather, I wish to elaborate briefly on three points from the lessons learned from the successful United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES). Those three points are: a pioneering model of disarmament that was used in the Croatian Danubian region during the UNTAES mission; a follow-on security assistance and political mission that ensued upon the successful completion of the United Nations mission; and finally, national strategy and policy measures regarding rehabilitation and reintegration of former combatants.

UNTAES was created in an environment favourable to its ultimate goal of peaceful reintegration of the formerly occupied Croatian territory: we had the agreement of the parties to the conflict; recourse to the military option was unattractive to all interested parties; and the political goal of peaceful reintegration was clearly set and known, as well as supported by the political will of the host Government, the international community and the skilled United Nations leadership in the field. And yet, the process of reintegration was, of course, more than politically challenging. It represented major technical and bureaucratic difficulties for civilian aspects of reintegration.

Critical to the orderly implementation of the civilian timetable of reintegration, however, was the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants. Importantly, this process was launched not only early on in the operation, but also, was completed swiftly and competently in an innovative manner of a weapons buy-back scheme. The firearms buy-back programme lasted approximately ten months, and was jointly conducted by the Croatian Government and UNTAES. Under the programme, significant amounts of firearms, explosive ammunition and ignition devices were collected, for which approximately \$1.6 million were paid. Since, the process of voluntary return and collection of small arms has continued, beginning in August, any further illegal possession of arms will be penalized.

The UNTAES operation was concluded on schedule on 15 January 1998. During the last few months, the number of peacekeepers was scaled down substantially. As the transition period proceeded, an increasing number of security functions were performed by the Transitional Police Force (TPF), which was made up of 40 per cent

each of Croats and Serbs and 20 per cent of other ethnic groups present in the region. Importantly, the international community provided training assistance for a number of TPF members, which proved crucial to establishing a high level of professionalism. This was invaluable to proper reintegration of former combatants and maintenance of law and order. Initially under the responsibility of UNTAES, the TPF later came under the management of the Ministry of the Interior one year prior to complete reintegration of the region.

The nine-month follow-on United Nations support group, by monitoring civilian police practices, added its weight to the positive momentum for a normalization of life in the area. Not necessarily enchanted, but fully cognizant of the magnitude and complexity of the ongoing process of reintegration, Croatia later invited the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to continue with certain monitoring duties in Eastern Slavonia. In doing so, Croatia has recognized the need to do what it takes to consolidate stability and sustain peace, and thereby help the local population move on towards joint tasks of rebuilding prosperity. In this regard, as was recently emphasized during the Zagreb regional conference on anti-personnel landmines, demining remains a priority task.

In the interest of speeding up reconciliation and overall post-conflict recovery, special importance should be attached to economic and social measures. In this respect, reintegration of ex-combatants into civil society carries additional weight. In Croatia, we tried to stimulate this reintegration in several ways, including by adopting an amnesty law that exonerated former rebels, except for the perpetrators of war crimes. Veterans are given priority in access to higher education and to employment in the public sector. They are also eligible for preferential lines of credit for new business ventures or agricultural leases. For those who cannot be included in the active working population, special unemployment benefits, including health care, as well as early retirement benefits, are also available.

Needless to say, all of these policy measures have proven expensive. They are taxing on the national budget of an economy burdened with reconstruction, low investment and real growth rates and high unemployment, as is always the case in a post-conflict society. This is why Croatia strongly recommends that, as a part of the international financial assistance provided to post-conflict societies, special funds be earmarked for, and allocated to, specific programmes that support rehabilitation and reintegration of former combatants.

As we have stated before in this and other forums, reconciliation does not take place overnight, but represents a long-term process. In this regard, I cannot over-emphasize the importance of establishing the truth about what happened during the conflict, that is, the establishment of responsibility for war crimes that have been committed. The goal of reintegration of former combatants cannot be attained without this element of justice. The alternative, if war criminals are not brought to justice, is that a neighbour will not trust a neighbour walking down the street after sunset, let alone join hands in rebuilding and developing a livelihood in the same community.

The President: I thank the representative of Croatia for the kind words he addressed to me and my delegation.

The next speaker is the representative of El Salvador. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Meléndez-Barahona (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the delegation of El Salvador, may I first of all convey to you, Sir, our congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of July, and on joining your Minister for Foreign Affairs in presiding over this meeting. We welcome this good initiative to consider the question of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants in a peacekeeping environment.

On 16 January 1992, a new phase began in the political history of El Salvador: the Government of El Salvador and the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN), under the auspices of the United Nations, signed the Peace Agreement in Chapultepec, Mexico, putting an end to armed conflict. Commitments were entered into to bring about peace and national reconciliation, to foster democratization and observance of human rights, and to start a programme of reconstruction and economic and social development so as to eliminate the root causes that gave rise to internal conflict and avoid its repetition.

In order for us to draw lessons from my country's experience, allow me first of all to make a few comments about the peace process in El Salvador. The end of the cold war, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and progress in subregional détente were external factors that bolstered the peace process in El Salvador, which had long remained stagnant and without major progress.

The rejection of a continuation of the war by the majority of the political forces in El Salvador; the conviction of the parties to the conflict that none of them could defeat the other militarily and that an armed struggle would not resolve the serious and profound national problems; and the lack of confidence and of a belief that the parties to the conflict could reach agreement directly: these opened up the way for the Government of El Salvador and the FMLN separately to seek the assistance of the Secretary-General to help them carry out uninterrupted negotiations to resolve the conflict. From that time, the Organization began to play a proactive, dynamic and catalytic role in the peace process in El Salvador.

From the signing in 1990 of the Geneva Agreement, which set out general objectives, until the signing in 1992 of the Chapultepec Agreement, the United Nations played a key role in the entire negotiating process, doing its utmost to facilitate rapprochement and understanding between the parties, especially at times when disagreements developed that might otherwise have jeopardized the continuation of the process.

United Nations participation was not limited to contributing to the success of the negotiations, which gradually produced positive results and which led ultimately to partial agreements and to comprehensive agreements: the 1990 San José Agreement on Human Rights; the 1990 Caracas Agreement on the timetable and agenda for the negotiating process; the 1991 Mexico Agreement on substantive issues relating to the agenda; and the New York agreements of September and December 1991 and January 1992, when final agreements were entered into that subsequently shaped the peace agreement signed in Mexico in 1992. The United Nations also had to carry out the delicate task of international verification on the ground to ensure compliance with the agreed commitments.

It is important to note that before the final agreements were reached, and at the request of the Central American Presidents, in response to calls from the General Assembly and the Security Council, and at the request of the Secretary-General, interested parties outside the region undertook to support the peace process and to seek actively and constructively to attain a final solution to the armed conflict in El Salvador, including through supporting and assisting the implementation of the agreements entered into by the parties to the conflict. Significant examples of this support were the joint letter from the Secretary of State of the United States and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and the joint declaration issued by those two countries, both dated

1 August 1991, relating to the peace process and to cooperation by those countries in Central America. In addition to expressing firm support for the Secretary-General and for the active participation of the Friends of the Secretary-General aimed at achieving progress in that process, they urged countries outside the region, including Cuba, to step up their efforts to resolve the conflict in El Salvador through peaceful means.

The signing of the peace agreements marked a new and different stage in the process. With the authorization of the Security Council by resolution 693 (1991), the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador was expanded. Initially, it had been established with a limited mandate aimed at ensuring active verification of compliance with the agreements on respect for and guarantees of human rights. In its expanded form, ONUSAL undertook a more complex, multidisciplinary operation, assuming responsibility for providing assistance and verifying the implementation of the Peace Agreement, which included, among other fundamental elements, a ceasefire, which was agreed upon even before the signing of the peace agreements; the separation of forces and the demobilization and destruction of FMLN weapons; the reduction and reform of the armed forces; constitutional reforms; the subordination of the armed forces to civilian authority; the elimination of the repressive forces and the creation of a new national civil police force; the legalization of the FMLN as a political party; the integration of ex-combatants into the political, economic and social life of the country; the reform of the judicial and electoral systems; and economic and social reform, including land-transfer programmes and programmes for the reintegration of and financial support for ex-combatants. Mechanisms were also to foster national reconciliation, such as the Truth Commission, whose mandate was to shed light on the most relevant cases of human rights violations, the ad hoc committee responsible for purging the armed forces and the Peace Commission (COPAZ), which was responsible for safeguarding and ensuring compliance with commitments undertaken to promote assistance and community development, mainly in the agricultural sector.

In the economic and social sphere, it is important to mention that our national efforts were complemented by international cooperation through the establishment of a special economic cooperation plan for Central America adopted by the General Assembly and implemented and coordinated by the United Nations Development Programme with the cooperation of other specialized agencies of the system. A regional development

programme for displaced persons, refugees and returnees (PRODERE) was also established, and this was active mainly in areas that were formerly involved in conflict. The programme was developed with the financial cooperation of the Government of Italy and with the coordinated participation of four specialized agencies: the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Labour Organization and the Pan American Health Organization of the World Health Organization.

I should also mention that, like the negotiating phase, the implementation of the commitments was not without its difficulties — difficulties that might even have jeopardized the fulfilment of the commitments. This was as much the result of the resistance of the armed forces to accepting change as it was to the violations of agreed obligations, and it was overcome through the intervention of ONUSAL and the political will and conviction of the parties, and their determination to achieve peace.

In this context, it is important to emphasize that the role of the United Nations was successful and effective because of the efficiency and professionalism with which the mandate of the Secretary-General and his staff was carried out. They acted impartially, respecting the positions and interests of the parties, and sought only to contribute to the achievement of a peaceful solution to the conflict in El Salvador.

On the basis of those considerations, we can learn certain lessons from El Salvador's experience. It is possible to establish cooperation between the world Organization and a small country to resolve complex and sensitive issues that, under certain circumstances, can go beyond national borders. The involvement of the United Nations came about through the sovereign decision of the Government of El Salvador and its acceptance by the FMLN. In other words, it was in keeping with the wishes of the parties to the conflict. The parties to the conflict expressed the necessary good faith and ensured that there was the political will to conduct negotiations until peace was achieved. The parties to the conflict accepted the active participation of the United Nations and undertook to cooperate and to comply with the commitments undertaken so as to consolidate peace. It is also important to emphasize that the political agreement reached between the parties on a firm and reliable basis was fundamental to guaranteeing the role of ONUSAL.

There was a delay in the time-frame for disarmament and demobilization because the parties did not mass their

troops in the designated places; the Peace Agreement's provisions relating to the dissolution of the public security forces were not complied with; the reintegration of the ex-combatants was delayed; and there was incomplete information about the arms possessed by irregular forces. Both parties made mutual accusations which led to mistrust and delayed the implementation of the commitments. However, the determination to achieve peace made gradual progress possible in these areas, and the commitments were finally observed.

The process of reintegration of ex-combatants was slower, as it was directly related to a long-standing problem related to land tenure and the concentration of land ownership in El Salvador, and to the limited financial resources available to support the land-transfer programme and to provide financial and technical support. It was not possible to complete this programme during the mandate of United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador; it was completed during the period when the United Nations had a final, limited presence in El Salvador to verify compliance with outstanding sensitive elements of the peace accords. This was at the end of the former presidential Administration's mandate.

Verification of compliance with the human rights agreement involved an unprecedented role for the United Nations as, for the first time, such verification was being carried out in a sovereign State. It is also very important to note that the United Nations mandate was carried out impartially and objectively, as a result of which the parties had faith in the initiatives that the Organization, in its role as an intermediary, put forward.

International support was fundamental, particularly when the interested parties from outside the region undertook to support the peace process and to avoid taking any steps that might exacerbate the conflict. Cooperation and international financial assistance provided essential support for social development programmes to attack the root causes of the conflict. They complemented the political efforts aimed at achieving peace.

We believe that there was close coordination between the Government and the United Nations specialized agencies, which on principle had to include the international financial institutions, which are in a position to provide the necessary financial support for carrying out the reconstruction and national-development programmes that contribute to peace-building in post-conflict situations.

Finally, it is important to note that despite the complexity and the multidisciplinary nature of the operation in El Salvador, it is clear that once there is political will,

and once there is agreement on a clear, precise framework of commitments, as well as a defined mandate that sets out the functions and scope of the Organization's role, the Organization is truly able to contribute to resolving a conflict, as took place in the case of El Salvador.

We think that the experience gained by the United Nations in various conflicts gives the Organization sufficient capability to draw up guidelines in this area.

The President: I thank the representative of El Salvador for his kind words addressed to me and for his kind reference to my Foreign Minister.

There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.