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Chairperson: Mr. José Luis Cancela (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda items 86 to 103 (continued)

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

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): Before we proceed this morning, I shall first suspend the meeting so that we may continue with the question and answer period that we began during yesterday's meeting. Thereafter, I will give the floor to the representatives of the Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament to respond to questions asked and to make whatever comments they deem appropriate.

I shall now suspend the meeting.

The meeting was suspended at 10.20 a.m. and resumed at 10.50 a.m.

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): The Committee will now proceed to hear statements on regional disarmament and security. Thereafter, we will begin our thematic debate on the disarmament machinery with an informal round table exchange, followed by thematic statements. I would also like to inform the Committee that, prior to adjourning this morning's meeting, I will briefly suspend the meeting so that we may hold the ceremony of presentation of Disarmament Fellowship certificates.

Before giving the floor to delegations, I would like to request the cooperation of all representatives in

respecting the time periods allotted for statements as much as possible, as there are 20 speakers on the list and we have a heavy programme of work this morning. I thank representatives in advance for their cooperation.

I shall now give the floor to speakers who wish to make statements or introduce draft resolutions on regional disarmament and security.

Mr. Bonello (Malta): As this is the first time that my delegation takes the floor in the First Committee, allow me to extend my congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to chair the Committee and for the exemplary manner in which you are conducting our proceedings.

Throughout the years, the rich diversity of the Mediterranean has contributed to the economic and social development of its littoral States, which have also witnessed upheavals, conflicts and a widening gap between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean. Those differences can potentially threaten not only the prosperity and security of the region as a whole, but also the maintenance of international peace and security.

This year, Malta is celebrating its forty-fifth year of both independence and membership of the Organization. In his first speech to the General Assembly, in 1964, then Prime Minister of Malta Borg Olivier specifically referred to the fact that the position of Malta in the centre of the Mediterranean influenced our way of life and that, ethnically, we represent a

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cross-section of all peoples bordering on the Mediterranean.

Our membership in the European Union has strengthened our Mediterranean vocation, thus enabling us to use our unique positioning to foster a proper dialogue among our European colleagues and our southern neighbours. Indeed, one can say that Malta's European and Mediterranean identities are complementary to one other. Motivated by our conviction that there can be no peace and security in Europe unless there is peace and security in the Mediterranean, Malta has supported, and has often been one of the driving forces behind, the various European and Mediterranean initiatives aimed at creating a more stable Mediterranean basin.

Malta has also continued to build on achievements made so far by enhancing dialogue among countries in the Mediterranean. We will continue to contribute to efforts to further strengthen the various Mediterranean and Euro-Mediterranean forums, including intergovernmental and parliamentary ones.

A few days ago, on 14 October, the European Commission and League of Arab States liaison office was officially inaugurated in Malta. The office, which was the result of Malta's pivotal role in bringing to fruition the February 2008 European Union-League of Arab States foreign affairs ministerial meeting in Malta, will serve as a platform for interregional engagement and dialogue on strategic issues of interest to both organizations. As rightly pointed out by our Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs in his opening address, the inauguration of the liaison office was important because it formalized relations between the European Commission and the Arab world in a way that has never been done before and serves as concrete recognition of the importance that the European Commission attaches to increased and more open dialogue with the Arab world as an equal partner.

Yet another instance where Malta continues to play its role in strengthening dialogue at the people-to-people level in the Mediterranean region is the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, which was established in 2006 and includes 25 Mediterranean member countries. Since its establishment, Mediterranean parliamentarians have been able to fully engage in the search for common approaches and solutions to priority issues facing the region, such as

the Middle East peace process, energy and related issues, organized crime, terrorism, maritime trade, environmental and climate change, disaster management, gender and equality, dialogue among cultures and religions and migration, among others.

Two issues that continue to have a debilitating effect on the political, economic and social development of the Mediterranean are the situation in the Middle East and the phenomenon of irregular migration. As a country that continues to support efforts to advance the Middle East peace process, Malta reiterates its vision of a two-State solution, with both Israel and Palestine living within secure and guaranteed borders and recognizing one another's sovereignty and right to peaceful coexistence. That has been our vision for decades, believing as we do that peace in the Middle East determines peace in the Mediterranean and even beyond.

The large influx of illegal immigrants that Malta and other Mediterranean countries continue to face is another priority issue. In view of the number of persons who risk their lives and grave consequences to cross the Mediterranean, the issue requires urgent regional and international attention. Last year, a record number 2,775 irregular migrants were rescued by the Armed Forces of Malta or landed in Malta. The number recorded so far this year is 1,475. Considering Malta's limited size, capacity and resources, such numbers continue to pose a burden that is acutely disproportionate to the size of our country and its population. As called for by the Prime Minister of Malta during his address in plenary meeting of the General Assembly,

"We ... strongly feel that the United Nations should address the issue of illegal immigration in a holistic way so as to find solutions to a humanitarian problem that Malta and others like us, especially in the Mediterranean, are currently facing." (A/64/PV.6)

Malta is convinced that peace and security in the Mediterranean should be given due importance. Peace, security and cooperation are undoubtedly central to the maintenance of regional stability and international peace and security. As a sponsor of the draft resolution entitled "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region" (A/C.1/64/L.49), Malta would like to call on all Member States not only to

adopt the draft resolution without a vote, but also to ensure the implementation of its provisions.

Mr. Aquino (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Peru is convinced that achieving international peace and security is a shared task that may be viewed as a series of concentric circles involving the establishment of peace and security at the national level, cooperation and confidence-building at the regional level and the promotion of multilateralism as a tool to bring about peace and security at the global level.

Peru is working together with other countries in the region to achieve that goal. We therefore support every effort to promote disarmament at the regional level, bearing in mind the specific characteristics of each region and in accordance with the principle of undiminished security at the lowest level of armaments. Consistent with the commitment we undertake annually at the General Assembly in adopting resolutions on disarmament and confidence-building at the regional and subregional levels, Peru welcomes the initiatives on disarmament, reduced spending on armaments and security that have been adopted by some countries at the regional and subregional levels. We also encourage the promotion of bilateral and regional confidence-building measures, with the consent and participation of the parties concerned, to avoid conflict and prevent the unintended and accidental outbreak of hostilities.

In order to achieve disarmament and regional security, it is necessary to build trust. Peru therefore believes that confidence-building measures are an important tool for pursuing peace and security. Their goal is to reduce uncertainty and misunderstanding in the conduct of States, thereby reducing the risk of military confrontation. We are convinced that implementing and strengthening such measures will make it possible not only to prevent conflict, it will also act as an effective tool that, combined with greater transparency and cooperation in defence and security matters, will lead to greater integration in the political, economic and cultural fields.

Latin America was a pioneer in implementing confidence-building measures. Thus, at a July 2002 meeting in Guayaquil, Ecuador, the Presidents of South America established the South American Zone of Peace and Cooperation, thereby proscribing the threat or use of force among the countries of the region. Similarly, they committed themselves to make progress towards

strengthening the Zone of Peace on the basis of, among many other measures, confidence-building, cooperation and ongoing consultations on security, defence and coordinated action at the relevant international forums, and transparency in, and the gradual limitation of, the acquisition of arms in accordance with the regime established by the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and other frameworks provided for in regional and international conventions on this important subject.

In spite of those unequivocal expressions of will, the declaration of the South American Zone of Peace did not succeed in preventing the continued expenditure of vast sums on arms acquisitions in the region, as stressed by Peruvian President Alan García Pérez in a letter sent to the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Defence of the Union of South American Nations, which has been circulated as an annex to document A/64/367.

In the light of this situation, Peru is continuing efforts to adopt measures to gradually and effectively limit defence expenditures, with the goal of making more resources available for the economic and social development of our peoples. In that spirit, Peru reaffirms the need to strengthen confidence-building measures and cooperation on defence matters in South America. We also reiterate the importance of ensuring that defence spending is carried out on the basis of countries' genuine security needs and of maximum transparency and full public disclosure. That would include broad participation by our countries in the Organization of American States information system on conventional weapons acquisitions and the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

Since the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, Peru has supported the resolution spearheaded by Argentina on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. We have done so out of our belief that the database established by the resolution will help to strengthen a mechanism for additional transparency at the United Nations. We therefore reiterate our request to the Secretary-General to keep the database current and to assist Member States that request assistance in organizing seminars, courses and workshops aimed at enhancing knowledge of new developments in this field.

Transparency in armaments is another fundamental element of confidence-building measures. We are therefore continuing our efforts at the regional level to achieve the full implementation of the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions. At the same time, on the international level, we will continue to work to achieve the universalization of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

The United Nations Charter provides for the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion of the world's human and economic resources towards armaments. In that spirit, we would like to highlight the important symbiosis between disarmament and development and to express our concern that increasingly larger resources are being devoted to military ends, which could be used to address development needs.

We are convinced that the implementation of security- and confidence-building measures will contribute to establishing an environment conducive to arms control and limiting conventional weapons, the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and disarmament, thereby making it possible to devote greater resources to the economic and social development of the States of the region.

Peru renews its commitment to disarmament and the implementation of confidence-building measures, as they will allow us to make progress on disarmament and non-proliferation while at the same ensuring the well-being of our peoples.

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Algeria to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/64/L.49.

Mr. Belaoura (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): As in past years, we have the honour to introduce, under agenda item 110, the draft resolution entitled "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region", which is contained in document A/C.1/64/L.49. The sponsors of this annual draft resolution reiterate their commitment to transforming the Mediterranean region into an area of peace and stability as a contribution to the maintenance and strengthening of international peace and security. The draft resolution's sponsors, whether they be Mediterranean countries or not, also express their common political will to promote the principles of

dialogue, solidarity, partnership and cooperation in the region.

This year's draft resolution is a redrafting of resolution 63/86, which was adopted under the same agenda item. It includes the necessary technical adjustments and the addition of a preambular paragraph welcoming the Treaty of Pelindaba on the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, which is another significant contribution to the strengthening of regional and international peace and security.

As indicated in the draft resolution, security in the Mediterranean is closely linked to European and international peace and security. The draft resolution takes note of and commends the initiatives and efforts of Mediterranean countries to deal with the problems and causes of tension in the region. It also notes the increasing awareness by Mediterranean countries of the need to make further efforts to promote cooperation among them at all levels.

The draft resolution calls upon all States of the region that have not yet done so to adhere to all the multilaterally negotiated international legal instruments in the field of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. It also encourages those States to strengthen confidence-building measures among them by promoting openness and transparency on all military matters.

All countries are also called upon to further strengthen cooperation in combating terrorism in all its forms while taking into account the relevant United Nations resolutions, as well as in combating transnational international crime, illicit arms transfers and illicit drug trafficking, which pose a serious threat to peace and stability in the region as a result of their negative impact on the social and economic development of the peoples of the Mediterranean.

Finally, as in previous sessions, the sponsors remain confident that the draft resolution will this year enjoy the support of all members of the Committee, before it is put before the General Assembly.

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Nepal to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/64/L.45*.

Mr. Rai (Nepal): My delegation has the honour to introduce, under agenda item 97 (d), a draft resolution, entitled "United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific", contained in document A/C.1/64/L.45*.

The sponsors of the draft resolution are Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Maldives, Micronesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nauru, New Zealand, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam, along with my country, Nepal. My delegation expresses its sincere gratitude to all the sponsors and those delegations that will sponsor the text.

I would like to take this opportunity to express Nepal's gratitude to the Member States for their continued support to the Regional Centre, including the voluntary contributions to its programme and activities. We are confident that the Centre will attract the active involvement and financial support of more Member countries in the days ahead.

Regional dialogue, engagement and confidence-building measures are some of the essential elements for creating an environment conducive to disarmament and non-proliferation. The United Nations Regional Centre would play a significant role towards that end by providing a permanent platform to Member States for constant dialogue and the exchange of views.

Regional initiatives and instruments on disarmament and non-proliferation are the lynchpins of the broader framework of global disarmament and non-proliferation. Given the sensitivity of regional political nuances, those instruments can create a higher level of understanding and a sense of confidence within the region. The Regional Centre is better placed for the job of catering to the needs of the region in disarmament and non-proliferation. The Regional Centre is an appropriate channel to cultivate regional initiatives on peace and disarmament.

In that conviction, we are introducing this draft resolution. As in previous years, the draft resolution aims at a sustained and effective role for the Regional Centre as a United Nations entity to work for peace, disarmament and non-proliferation in the region. Thus, my delegation, along with the sponsor countries, urges the Committee to adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

Mr. Almarzouqi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): Israel still has its nuclear arsenal and its means of delivery. That is one of the main reason for the Middle East having become one of the tensest region's the world. The United Arab Emirates condemns Israel, which continues to be the only country in the Middle East to acquire that type of

dangerous weapon, and calls on the international community to adopt firmer policies on that important issue.

Should this situation persist, it will encourage other countries of the region to seek to acquire such weapons. In that regard, we recall the relevant international resolutions, in particular the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Security Council resolution 487 (1981) and the resolution of the International Atomic Energy Agency on Israel's nuclear capabilities, adopted in Vienna last September.

First, we call for diplomatic, political and economic pressure to persuade Israel to adhere unconditionally and without further delay to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to oblige it to adopt transparency measures in that regard. Secondly, we urge the Government of Israel to fully cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency by submitting all its nuclear activities and installations for inspection and by accepting the principle of complete verification, in accordance with the Agency's comprehensive safeguards regime. Thirdly, we call on Israel to immediately halt its production and stockpiling of all fissile or other material or equipment used to produce weapons of mass destruction and to continue to halt all nuclear tests, dismantle its existing nuclear arsenal and convert it to peaceful civilian uses. Fourthly, all countries, in particular those possessing nuclear weapons, must respect their obligations under the relevant international resolutions, which call on them to refrain from providing any kind of financial, technical and scientific assistance that could help Israel to develop its nuclear arsenal and stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction.

Furthermore, we call on the Islamic Republic of Iran to pursue its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency and the international community and to maintain its commitment to respecting the rules of international law and international legality, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, so as to dispel all concerns and doubts about the nature and goals of its nuclear programme, thereby maintaining the security and stability of the States and peoples of the region and the international community, as well as regional and international peace. In that regard, we wish to state that

developing countries have the right to acquire nuclear technology for peaceful civilian purposes under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency, in accordance with the provisions of article IV of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

In conclusion, we hope that all delegations and members of the Committee will embark on the work of the two draft resolutions A/C.1/64/L.3 and A/C.1/64/L.4 seeking to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and to combat the risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East, in accordance with international efforts aimed at disarming the region and at freeing it of all kinds of weapons of mass destruction.

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt to introduce draft resolutions A/C.1/64/L.3 and A/C.1/64/L.4.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): The Middle East region remains a region where ambiguous nuclear activities, unsafeguarded nuclear facilities and the associated threat of nuclear proliferation continue to undermine regional security, disrupt regional stability, provoke nuclear arms races and erode confidence.

I take the floor today to formally introduce two draft resolutions of profound importance to the security and stability in the Middle East region. These are entitled “Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East”, contained in document A/C.1/64/L.3, and “The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East”, contained in document A/C.1/64/L.4.

The draft resolution entitled “Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East” maintains the exact substantive content of General Assembly resolution 63/38, adopted last year by consensus under the same agenda item, and has only been technically updated. The draft resolution addresses one of the most important regional aspirations, supported by the General Assembly since 1974, as a recipe for lasting peace, security and stability in the Middle East.

The draft resolution embodies both a regional and an international vision for the future of the Middle East, where nuclear weapons shall have no place and no role and where confidence-building, mutual trust and the prosperity of the peoples of the region should replace such threats.

Our vision for a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East requires solid international resolve and urgent international action in order to make a true contribution to international peace and security. We thus look forward to the continued adoption of the draft resolution by consensus as a reflection of our renewed common determination to fulfil its objectives, in order to bring stability, security and prosperity to all peoples of the Middle East without exception.

The second draft resolution, entitled “The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East”, contained in document A/C.1/64/L.4, contains the same substantive text as General Assembly resolution 63/84, but has been technically updated.

As is traditionally the case, the draft resolution is being presented by Egypt and sponsored by the States members of the League of Arab States: Algeria, Bahrain, the Comoros, Djibouti, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen and Palestine, as well as Egypt.

We believe that Israel’s accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the placement of all of its nuclear activities, facilities and materials under full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards will address a major imbalance in nuclear commitments in the region whereby all States, with the exception of Israel, have become parties to the NPT as non-nuclear-weapon States with comprehensive safeguards agreements in place.

Ratification of the NPT by Djibouti and Oman in 1995 was intended to achieve universality of the Treaty in the Middle East and constituted one of the strong bases of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, which remains one of the inseparable elements which allowed adoption of decision on the indefinite extension of the Treaty.

It is therefore expected of Israel not only that it join the NPT and thus achieve universality of the Treaty in the Middle East, but also that it place its nuclear activities and capabilities under full-scope IAEA safeguards, which would reflect positively on prospects for a wide range of regional and international disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control regimes.

Last year, resolution 63/84, on the risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East, enjoyed the support of 169 States in the General Assembly. We look forward to continued significant international support for the important draft resolution that is before the Committee and invite the few States which voted against the resolution or abstained on it last year to reconsider their position and to join the international community in supporting this year's draft resolution.

As we approach the 2010 NPT Review Conference, to be held six months from now, which will represent a major test of the international community's commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and considering the prominence of the Middle East in this regard, I call upon all States to support both draft resolutions as a contribution to restoring the credibility and viability of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, regionally and internationally.

Ms. Khioka (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): We all agree that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones plays a prominent role in strengthening the non-proliferation regime and in building regional and international peace and security and regional confidence, which in turn contributes greatly to nuclear and general and complete disarmament. The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones also expresses and promotes values that are dear to us all.

Along with efforts towards nuclear disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, we encourage strengthened international cooperation to work towards eliminating environmental pollution in regions where such pollution has been caused by radioactive materials. Action by a single State towards horizontal nuclear non-proliferation could reduce tension and ease the threat of the use of nuclear force involving other non-nuclear-weapon States.

We must take into account the lessons learned from the study of the efforts and measures that led to the signing of regional nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties, or to the establishment of zones free of weapons of mass destruction, before such treaties are proclaimed and applied in the Middle East region. The Middle East is different from other regions. It is a strategically sensitive region where economic interests are of great importance. Moreover, any escalation in arms acquisition would have long-term consequences for international peace and security. The Middle East has also been the setting for one of the longest

conflicts in contemporary history — the Israeli-Arab conflict — and for other armed conflicts and political turmoil.

My delegation stresses the importance of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. We have expressed this on many occasions through our support for General Assembly resolutions on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East.

Iraq believes that the Middle East is not at present free of nuclear weapons, since it has been impossible to verify Israel's military nuclear capacity; yet all other countries in the region have permitted the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to inspect their nuclear facilities. The Government of Iraq stresses that any attempt to make the Middle East a nuclear-weapon-free zone should be preceded by a series of basic steps by Israel, in particular nuclear disarmament, accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), placement of all its nuclear facilities under the comprehensive IAEA safeguards regime and implementation of Security Council resolution 487 (1981). Those steps would reduce tension in the region.

The idea of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East may have been put forward prior to progress on this in other regions. The universal support for the idea stems from the fact that it is a key way to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict and eliminate tension in the region. But in spite of all of the efforts made to promote Israel's accession to the NPT and its acceptance of IAEA inspections of its sites, implementing that solution has remained impossible.

It is important to highlight all the measures and initiatives taken this year, for example the 2009 session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference, the two IAEA resolutions, the Security Council summit meeting on disarmament and September's agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation, all of which resulted from the strong political will to achieve for all this noblest of goals: to ensure a safe and peaceful life for future generations, a life free of weapons and their attendant tragedies. My delegation hopes that the 2010 NPT Review Conference will be yet another brick in the building of a structure of peace for the Middle East.

Achieving security and stability in the Middle East will require the elimination of all weapons of

mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, in order to achieve the objectives of paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991), of the relevant General Assembly resolutions that are adopted by consensus every year on this subject, and of the decisions taken at the 1995 Review Conference and the 2000 Sixth Review Conference.

I would also like to take this opportunity to highlight the final declaration of the twenty-first Arab summit of 2009, the Doha Declaration and the declaration issued by the Non-Aligned Movement last July in Sharm el-Sheikh. The latter called on the international community to work for the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, in the Middle East; to take steps to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone to strengthen international peace and security; and to compel Israel to join the NPT and subject all of its nuclear activities and sites to the IAEA comprehensive safeguards regime.

Mr. Nazarian (Armenia): As this is the first time I am taking the floor during this debate, allow me to extend to you, Ambassador Cancela, our congratulations on your assumption of your very responsible post. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau and assure them of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

Armenia attaches great importance to disarmament, in particular to the efforts of the United Nations aimed at establishing international and regional security, stability and an atmosphere of confidence. We regard these efforts and initiatives as essential measures to decrease international and regional threats and instability. Besides arms control, the gradual reduction of armaments and disarmament play a pivotal role in the prevention of conflicts and their management and lead to confidence-building and security.

Therefore, the unconditional implementation and further strengthening of the existing disarmament and non-proliferation agreements, as well as international verification mechanisms and institutions, should become priorities for the international community.

In this context, Armenia continues to actively support the efforts of the United Nations and other international and regional organizations to stop the uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons. In particular, Armenia is committed to the effective

implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The Programme of Action is of strategic importance and can play an undeniably positive role in reducing regional threats and instability.

At the same time, the exchange of relevant information constitutes a very important aspect of international arms control and disarmament. In this regard, it is worth noting the existing exchange system between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which enhances transparency for Member States in the control, reduction, export and import of armaments and military expenditures.

Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels is an issue of primary importance for the security of my country. Fragile security in the South Caucasus requires an unconditional and complete observance of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and its provisions, which play a fundamental role in the maintenance of stability and peace.

Unfortunately, that essential instrument is being challenged in our region. Over the past years, the ceilings established for the number of the conventional weapons possessed by the countries of our region have been overtly disregarded, posing a direct threat to the fragile stability in the South Caucasus.

In our statements during previous sessions of the General Assembly, we have drawn the attention of the Committee to an unprecedented arms race that has been unleashed in the South Caucasus, resulting in the escalation and deterioration of the overall security situation in the region. In this regard, Armenia would like to draw the attention of the Committee to the violation of the Treaty obligations by Azerbaijan. That country continues to arm itself heavily and has already exceeded almost all Treaty quotas in battle tanks, armoured vehicles and artillery. This fact has been registered since 2007 in both the Treaty's annual military information exchange and the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

These steps by Azerbaijan contradict the letter and the spirit of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. They are also in direct conflict with various United Nations documents and resolutions related to the reduction of military budgets, regional

disarmament, conventional arms control at the regional level and transparency in armaments. These issues are part and parcel of the agenda of the disarmament discourse.

We are seriously concerned that the arms race and the endless militaristic and aggressive rhetoric from the highest levels in Azerbaijan are aimed at derailing the peace negotiations on Nagorny Karabakh and constitute an attempt to impose a military solution to the conflict. There is no doubt that this policy will not yield any positive results. On the contrary, it will continue to threaten the fragile security and stability in the region, resulting, inter alia, in a stalemate in the resolution of existing disputes in the South Caucasus.

Recent developments in our region have demonstrated that the use of force can bring no durable solution to the existing conflicts. There is no alternative in resolving this conflict to a political compromise arising from negotiations based on the full commitment of the parties to the non-use of force.

Armenia remains fully committed to its international obligations on arms control and disarmament. We believe in the viability and efficiency of the United Nations instruments in enhancing trust, building confidence and promoting regional dialogue and cooperation. Full compliance with United Nations resolutions and regional arrangements on arms control and disarmament is one of the most essential and critical factors in bringing us closer to stability, cooperation and durable peace not only in the South Caucasus, but also beyond.

Mr. Vasiliev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): In our statements in the course of the general political debate, the Russian delegation drew attention to the regionalization of global politics, which we see as a very noteworthy trend in the dynamics of international relations. In the task of achieving a genuine strengthening of fundamental values, adherence to the norms of international law, the non-use of force, respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, commitment to the use of peaceful means in the settlement of conflicts, and the principles of arms control are as relevant today as ever. Unfortunately, we are seeing these principles violated around the world and their observance marked by double standards.

In August 2008, the Russian Federation was forced to halt at its very borders Georgia's aggression

against the Republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Even before the conflict, we repeatedly raised the question of the need for Georgia to conclude treaties with its neighbours on the non-use of force. In response, we heard assurances that the leadership of Georgia had no aggressive intentions.

The report of the International Independent Fact-finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia led by Heidi Tagliavini, which was recently issued by the European Union, states that the factors that led to the tragic conflict included the Georgian policy of connivance, the deliveries of arms for unjustified defence needs and many other factors. Another — and by no means negligible — cause of the conflict was the fact that the existing mechanisms of regional security either were disregarded or simply could not be implemented to resolve the situation.

Russia has repeatedly stated in particular that, as far back as the 1980s, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) had become hopelessly out of date. Indeed, in the twenty-first century, how can one talk about a security system based on a balance of forces between the long-defunct Warsaw Treaty and a considerably expanded NATO?

Russia was one of the first to sign the Agreement on Adaptation of the CFE. However, unfortunately, its example was not followed by a number of countries in Europe. Under these circumstances, Russia introduced a moratorium on the implementation of its obligations under the old CFE. I would like to make it quite clear that we do not seek the destruction of the military security system. Our step is designed to send a signal about the need for restoring the viability of the regime of regional control of conventional armaments in Europe.

We welcome the nascent dialogue with key countries on problems connected with the CFE. However, if we are to break the deadlock, we do not need vague promises but concrete, unequivocal commitments from all sides. It is hardly realistic to expect Russia to make concessions in return for promises to take our concerns into account in the future. We also understand that security questions are often complex and not confined strictly to disarmament measures. To strengthen stability, we need to strengthen mutual trust, transparency and predictability.

It was precisely in recognition of the complex nature of regional security questions that Russian

President Medvedev put forward the idea of developing major treaty on European security. Its key element should be the principle of the indivisibility of security throughout the Euro-Atlantic space. Russia calls for joint work on the draft of such a treaty on the part of all countries and organizations operating in Europe. We must agree on clear-cut, up-to-date and, above all, effective rules of the game. We look forward to discussions in the First Committee on regional problems, which should help to develop universal principles that would be applicable throughout the world.

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Gabon to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/64/L.27.

Mr. Onanga Ndiaye (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I have the signal honour today of introducing to the First Committee, under agenda item 97, the draft resolution entitled "Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa" (A/C.1/64/L.27). My country, Gabon, as Chairman of the Advisory Committee this year, coordinated the preparation of the draft resolution, which is the outcome of the twenty-eighth ministerial meeting of the Advisory Committee held in Libreville from 4 to 8 May 2009. The Committee's members are Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe.

The July 2009 report of the Secretary-General, entitled "Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa" (A/64/163), served as an inventory and appraisal of the activities of the Advisory Committee, and, given its comprehensive and cross-cutting nature, as a catalyst for the draft resolution before the First Committee. The report refers to the discussions of the 11 Central African States on the geopolitical situation in our subregion and recent developments affecting certain brother countries, as well as to important decisions for the strengthening of confidence and the deepening of dialogue between States, which are essential to the development of greater security in the subregion. The report also demonstrates our commitment to implementing and following up on previous decisions.

We, the countries of Central Africa, are delighted to have been able to design a document that highlights the need to have and to belong to the Advisory Committee as an expression of our diversity that it is more representative of our mutually enriching specific features. This framework is based on the synergy of our common interests and exemplary cooperation, represents an effective partnership with the United Nations, and contributes greatly to the promotion of security and stability and thus of peace.

Accordingly, the draft resolution, while reproducing practically word for word resolution 63/78, adopted by consensus at the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, takes into account the recommendations of the twenty-eighth meeting of the Advisory Committee held in Libreville in May.

It reaffirms that the purpose of the Standing Advisory Committee is to conduct reconstruction and confidence-building activities in Central Africa among its member States, including through confidence-building and arms limitation measures. It also reaffirms the importance of disarmament and arms limitation programmes in Central Africa carried out by the States of the subregion with the support of the United Nations, the African Union and other international partners.

The draft resolution welcomes the adoption by States members of the Standing Advisory Committee of the Code of Conduct for the Defence and Security Forces in Central Africa on 8 May 2009 and the major strides made by States in the drafting of a legal instrument on the control of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa and encourages interested countries to provide their financial support to the implementation of the "Sao Tome Initiative".

The draft resolution also welcomes the adoption of the Libreville Declaration calling on States members of the Committee to contribute to the Special Trust Fund for the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa in response to the concerns raised this morning about financing questions.

To support this major enterprise, the Central African States have expressed their support for the maintenance of the secretariat of the Committee and encourages closer cooperation with the United Nations, including the Security Council, and other partners and observers. In my statement this morning, I forgot to

mention these partners. I will do so now in order to thank them, in particular those that have contributed enormously to support the Lomé Bureau, specifically Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Togo, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the European Union, the International Organization of la Francophonie, the International Action Network on Small Arms and the African Security Sector Network.

Furthermore, the draft resolution expresses its satisfaction to the Secretary-General for his support for the revitalization of the activities of the Standing Advisory Committee, and requests him to continue to provide the assistance needed to ensure the success of its regular biannual meetings.

In conclusion, allow me to express my great appreciation to those delegations that took part in the consultations on the draft resolution and agreed to sponsor it, as well as to other delegations that will become co-sponsors, in the hope that it will be adopted very soon by consensus, in accordance with well-established tradition.

I should not forget to stress the valuable and ongoing help of the competent services of the Secretariat and the Department for Disarmament Affairs, which throughout the process offered us clarifications and assistance on the different points on which they were asked for help.

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Pakistan to introduce draft resolutions A/C.1/64/L.28, A/C.1/64/L.29 and A/C.1/64/L.30.

Mr. Tarar (Pakistan): In 1993, the United Nations Disarmament Commission recognized that regional and global approaches to disarmament and arms limitation go hand in hand and should be pursued in tandem to promote peace and security. The recognition stems from the fact that the arms races ensuing from regional and subregional instability stultify international efforts to promote arms control and disarmament.

At the same time, bilateral efforts at confidence-building can be hamstrung by one or both parties' extraregional concerns. Meaningful weapons of mass destruction and conventional disarmament and arms limitation at the global level, therefore, can remove such impediments. Dispute resolution on a just and equitable basis should be at the heart of such efforts.

We do need to remember, however, that a one-size-fits-all approach cannot work. Security related confidence-building measures at the regional level have to be tailored to the particular requirements of different regions. Simple arrangements on transparency, openness and risk reduction can be used to set the stage for concrete arms control and disarmament measures. Nevertheless, regional particularities and specific bilateral approaches notwithstanding, the end result should enhance regional and global peace and security. The preservation of inter-State defence capability balance at the lowest level of armaments should be the aim of arms control and disarmament-related regional confidence-building measures.

The lion's share of responsibility in this regard falls on the militarily significant States, which must take the lead in promoting agreements for regional peace and security. Additionally, the elimination of the most destabilizing military capabilities and imbalances should be a priority of regional arrangements for disarmament and arms limitation. The induction of sophisticated weaponry, especially in tense regions, compels reliance on nuclear deterrence.

Confidence-building measures are essential to creating favourable atmospherics, but are not an end in themselves. Confidence-building measures have to be accompanied by Charter-compliant efforts for the peaceful settlement of disputes. Such efforts, accompanied by concrete confidence-building measures, can mitigate regional tensions, leading to an environment wherein disarmament and arms control agreements can be promoted.

Pakistan has resubmitted draft resolutions on regional disarmament (A/C.1/64/L.28), conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels (A/C.1/64/L.29) and confidence-building measures in the regional and subregional context (A/C.1/64/L.30). These draft resolutions recognize the significance of regional approaches to arms control, disarmament and confidence-building for international peace and stability and the complementarity between regional and global approaches. We look forward to the consensus adoption of these draft resolutions by the General Assembly this year.

In its own region, South Asia, Pakistan is pursuing a composite dialogue process that includes both nuclear and conventional confidence-building

measures. Several confidence-building measures already are in place. These include the establishment of hotlines and agreements on prenotification of flight testing of ballistic missiles and reducing the risk of accidents relating to nuclear weapons. But we believe that the time is nigh for risk-reduction measures to lead to restraint and avoidance of an arms race. Accordingly, we have proposed a strategic restraint regime for South Asia, comprising conflict resolution, nuclear and missile restraint and conventional balance. The resolution of outstanding disputes would greatly facilitate the attainment of the objectives of this regime.

In different regions of the world, including South Asia, the international community can promote peace and security by, first, supporting and promoting a comprehensive approach to peace and security; secondly, by not undermining strategic stability by creating nuclear disparity; thirdly, by not introducing destabilizing weapons systems that can undermine military balance and spawn an arms race; and, fourthly, by bringing about meaningful progress towards arms control at the global level, which can be the harbinger of substantive restraint measures at the regional level.

Mrs. Sánchez Quintero (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): On this issue, my delegation wishes to refer to a specific matter that seriously threatens the regional peace and security of our countries of the South. It is well known that all countries of Latin America have been victims of political and economic intervention and aggression. For Cuba, the new aggressive interest of the United States in building new military bases in Latin America and its decision to re-establish its Fourth Fleet in our region are of grave concern. This is a direct and unjustifiable threat to the sovereignty and integrity of the peoples of the Americas.

Foreign military bases do not and cannot represent a contribution to the peace or security of nations. Many have been established against the will of the peoples and Governments of our countries. Historical experience demonstrates that they have served as a fundamental instrument to commit acts of aggression, harassment and subversion against our countries and neighbours, promoting wars and confrontation between neighbouring countries. This military might does not fulfil a global need; it fulfils a need of an economic system that is being imposed on the world.

As we have indicated previously, military spending has doubled over the past 10 years. At this time, it is the most prosperous industry in the world. The most modern science and technology have been devoted to developing weapons, which now include not only thousands of nuclear warheads or the destructive capability of modern conventional weapons, but also remote-controlled drone aircraft. It is being alleged that military bases in Latin America are necessary to the joint fight against drug trafficking, terrorism, arms trafficking, illegal immigration, the possession of weapons of mass destruction, nationalist expansionism and natural disasters.

The presence on all continents and in all oceans of so much foreign military power is a reason for concern to our peoples, no matter what type of Government or alliances they have. The existence of such a broad network of military bases, aircraft carriers, nuclear submarines, modern warships and sophisticated combat aircraft carrying all kinds of weapons and hundreds of thousands of soldiers make us wonder how much security we can have in today's world.

History cannot be erased, nor can we ignore the threat to and dire consequences for our regions of the South of the development of programmes of military expansion, which run counter to the independence and sovereignty of our nations. Now that the time for change has come, practical actions and political will are needed to stop that unbridled military might and the reach of its tentacles towards our countries. If a real contribution to international peace and security is sought, all military bases should be withdrawn from Latin America and the Caribbean, including the foreign military base in Guantánamo, Cuban territory occupied illegally and against the will of our people.

Mr. Ismayil-Zada (Azerbaijan): Azerbaijan joins other delegations in congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their well-deserved election.

The Republic of Azerbaijan attaches serious importance to joint efforts in addressing regional and global issues, with particular focus on regional security, combating terrorism, the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ensuring energy security. We strongly advocate a region free from weapons of mass destruction.

The security of each State and, more broadly, international and regional peace and security depend on whether States follow the norms and principles of international law and use them as a tool to guide and shape their foreign and security policies. Unfortunately, the unlawful use of force has still not been removed from the context of international and regional relations. Today, civilian populations are suffering in many places around the world due to the manifest failure of individual States to fulfil their most basic and compelling responsibilities. Armed conflicts, military aggression and foreign occupation involving the most serious international crimes are only a few vivid examples from our recent history of the bitter consequences of non-compliance by individual States with the norms and principles of international law.

Regional disarmament and security play a vital role in establishing peace in conflict situations. Unfortunately, unresolved conflicts in many instances promote the concentration of uncontrolled arms and provide fertile ground for transnational organized crime and other illegal activities.

The most vivid example of misconduct with regard to the norms and principles of international law is the almost two-decade-long and still unresolved Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorny Karabakh conflict, which also stands out as a major threat to international and regional peace and security. As a result of the aggression carried out by Armenia, almost one-fifth of the territory of Azerbaijan has been occupied and approximately 1 million Azerbaijani people have become internally displaced or refugees. The most serious international offences, including war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, have been committed in the course of this conflict.

Armenia is intensively building up its military presence and capability in the Nagorny Karabakh region and other occupied territories of Azerbaijan. The available data indicate that, since the occupation, the number of arms that are unaccounted for and uncontrolled has consistently increased in these territories. According to our information, Armenia is hiding up to 316 tanks, 324 armoured combat vehicles and 322 artillery systems in the occupied territories. When these pieces of equipment are counted against the maximum levels of Armenia's weapons holdings, it is obvious that it has exceeded its ceilings more than twofold, thus seriously changing the military balance in the region in its favour.

As a consequence, great numbers of uncontrolled treaty-limited equipment are accumulated in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. These territories give Armenia an opportunity to use repair facilities and, moreover, to transfer and hide treaty-limited equipment from the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) community. This endangers not only the national security of Azerbaijan, but also the stable development of the whole region.

Against this background, it is puzzling that the statements of Armenian officials are full of accusations directed against Azerbaijan about its allegedly militaristic intentions and armaments race. The Armenians are stirring up hysteria about the rapid development of Azerbaijan.

Armenia also accuses Azerbaijan of increasing its military budget and violating its arms limitation norms. At the same time, it fails to mention that the annual defence spending of Azerbaijan remains in line with overall budget increases, that Azerbaijan continues to spend a much smaller percentage of its gross domestic product (GDP) on its army than Armenia, and that the size of the armed forces of Azerbaijan is proportional to its population, territory and length of borders and remains smaller than Armenia's. The military budget of Armenia as a percentage of GDP is 3.86 per cent, while Azerbaijan's is 3.26 per cent. Moreover, comparative analysis shows that, in correlation with its population, Armenia is much more militarized in terms of the number of military personnel and the quantity of armaments.

We understand the true reason for Armenia's misinterpretation, which has been announced in all international forums. The purpose is to create a smokescreen for its intentions in the occupied territories and to buy time. Armenia also passes over in silence the fact that arms control mechanisms are not effective in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and that it deploys, beyond international control, a great number of armaments and ammunition in these territories.

Despite the fact that Azerbaijan is at war and that its territories are under occupation, we continue to fulfil our commitments under the CFE. Azerbaijan has reduced and destroyed more than 150 pieces of treaty-limited equipment and armaments over the past five years in order to continue to comply with the limits set by the Tashkent agreement.

Azerbaijan's strategy is aimed at achieving the liberation of all the occupied territories and thus the restoration of the State's territorial integrity, the return of the forcibly displaced population to their homes, and the establishment of durable peace and stability in the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan and the entire South Caucasus.

Mrs. Ancidey (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the inclusion of the topic of regional disarmament and security on the agenda of the First Committee at the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Mr. Chairman, belongs to a region to which your country, Uruguay, also belongs — Latin America and the Caribbean. It is an area of great economic, social and cultural potential. In the past century, our countries turned their backs on each other, lacking the political will to achieve the integrationist ideal of our liberator, Simón Bolívar. The establishment of the Organization of American States did not live up to expectations. It brought about substantial change, but only very slowly, generating confidence and bringing the institutions of our countries closer together.

The creation of the Rio Group, which was itself an offshoot of the Contadora Group, of which Venezuela was a founding member, was another important step forward in this regard. The Contadora movement opened up new opportunities for cooperation and dialogue among Latin American countries, which were exhausted by conflicts incited by hegemonic international players.

Our region is currently undergoing historic revolutionary changes that are bringing dignity to the daily lives of our people and strongly promoting a heightened integrationist awareness among the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. The Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, together with its sister countries of South America, the Caribbean and Central America, is creating new and strengthened spaces and mechanisms for coordination and dialogue. These are significantly strengthening the networks of fruitful, fraternal cooperation, solidarity and friendship among our peoples. They include the Union of South American Nations, Petrocaribe and the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas. We note that this heightened awareness of the unity among our institutions and peoples enabled Latin America to make

progress, at the start of the millennium and without further delay, towards the creation of a South American union.

It was in this framework that the South American Defence Council was born. Its overall objective is to consolidate our region as an area of peace that contributes to world peace, to building a South American defence identity, and to strengthening regional defence cooperation. All of these objectives will be attained through a mechanism for early consultation, information-sharing and risk assessment in situations that threaten the peace of our countries.

For the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, regional security and stability are a priority. One of Venezuela's highest priorities for regional security is respect for the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence. Non-interference in our regional affairs is of special importance.

The heads of States of our region have declared the region of South America to be a zone of peace in which we renounce the use of force among States of the region. Along those lines, we note the recent meeting held in Bariloche, Argentina, at which the status of zone of peace was reaffirmed and it was declared that the presence of foreign military forces in the region, with means and resources to pursue their own objectives, must not threaten the sovereignty and integrity of our nations. That meeting demonstrated the privileged role of communication and cooperation among the States of South America as natural means of resolving differences and adopting confidence-building measures.

However, my delegation recognizes that this is insufficient with respect to the presence of foreign Powers, much less the greatest military Power and arsenal in the world. That presence has fomented distrust and sown a climate of tension among members of the region, to the extent that my country feels directly threatened by the installation of seven United States military bases in Colombia, very much despite the diplomatic efforts of other members of the region to prevent such a loss of prerogative.

Statistics show that the Latin America and Caribbean region has one of the lowest levels of military spending in the world. Nevertheless, recent purchases to refurbish the conventional weapons stockpiles of several States of the region were presented to public international opinion as an arms

race or as excessive military spending. We therefore continue to support confidence-building measures as instruments to facilitate cooperation and understanding among States. We also recognize that they must be flexible in order to adapt to the realities of every situation — and the reality of our region is changing.

Finally, our delegation reiterates its full commitment to the promotion of a safer more peaceful world and affirms that respect for the principles of international law and the United Nations Charter should be our central tenets.

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the Executive Secretary of the Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Mr. Sang (Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons): At the outset, on behalf of the Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons (RECSA), I wish to join representatives who have taken the floor before me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to preside over this Committee during the current General Assembly session.

Disarmament remains an indispensable tool to help create a secure environment that is favourable to human development, as enshrined in the letter and the spirit of the United Nations Charter. Indeed, arms control and disarmament issues are critical to peace and security in Africa and the world at large.

RECSA is working in close collaboration with the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, supporting efforts to build the capacity of countries to undertake effective disarmament. In addition, RECSA is working with other international and regional bodies to consolidate gains in controlling the problem of small arms in the continent. In partnership with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, RECSA organized a follow-up meeting to the Third Biennial Meeting of States on Small Arms in Kigali, Rwanda, which brought together representatives of the States of the Great Lakes, the Horn of Africa and the Southern African Development Community regions.

RECSA member States have continued to undertake measures both internally and jointly across borders to control the number of arms in the wrong hands. Allow me therefore to highlight the experiences of a cross-section of our member States.

Through funding from the United Nations Development Programme, the Burundi National Focal Point on small arms control and management has been implementing a project to raise awareness among civilians to boost the disarmament programme and the fight against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Relevant public awareness programmes to improve the level of voluntary surrender of illegal weapons have been conducted with much success. Many citizens are now turning up at collection centres to give up arms acquired during Burundi's period of conflict.

In Kenya, President Mwai Kibaki recently issued an order requiring disciplined forces to disarm civilians in possession of illegal arms, while calling on citizens owning such weapons to surrender them or face prosecution. Although disarmament activities have been taking place periodically in areas most affected by high numbers of illegal firearms, a need has arisen recently to give priority to disarmament efforts in light of the increasing number of firearms flowing into the country from neighbouring States in conflict.

In Rwanda, the disarming of combatants returning from the Democratic Republic of the Congo is recognized as a priority by the Government in an effort to mop up illegally held arms. In addition, members of the public who may be in possession of illegal arms are encouraged to surrender them or report to the law enforcement agencies. In exchange, the Government is promoting income-generating activities in view of the fact that armed violence hinders and retards sustainable development, while at the same time poverty increases the potential for armed violence.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the National Focal Point on small arms control and management has been working closely with a national non-governmental organization to collect arms surrendered by citizens. Sensitization workshops are being held to raise awareness about the disarmament exercise in those parts of the country severely affected by a large number of illegal arms.

Somalia has been devastated by years of continued violence and instability. There is now a renewed sense of hope that the final reconciliation corner has been turned. An internationally supported unity Government was formed in Djibouti early this year with a subsequent move of all its institutions to

the capital city, Mogadishu. However, the existence of an estimated 60,000 militia members constrains State-building efforts and necessitates implementation of a comprehensive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. There is a need, therefore, for the international community to support Somalia in this respect.

The Sudan has established disarmament commissions for both the North and the South. The two bodies are coordinating disarmament among citizens and ex-combatants in the two parts of the country to mop up arms left in the illegal possession of citizens after the end of a 21-year war. The disarmament challenge is great in the Sudan. Nevertheless, the Government has been unrelenting in its efforts to control the number of illegal arms among citizens.

The Government of Uganda has undertaken the destruction of large numbers of assorted small arms and light weapons, ammunition and unexploded ordnance to ensure that they do not find their way into illegal circulation. The Government has put in place a disarmament and development programme in one of the regions most affected by the small arms problem. The programme is a comprehensive plan that focuses on a range of issues that influence availability and access to small arms.

With funding from the Japanese Government, RECSA will provide further support to member States by boosting their capacity to undertake disarmament. Through a one-year project to enhance human security in the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa by preventing the proliferation of illicit small arms through practical disarmament, member States receive training in the area of disarmament and stockpile management, including creating and maintaining small arms databases for effective recordkeeping.

RECSA is also engaged in other measures to control the problem of small arms in its member States. We have donated two machines to each member State to facilitate the marking of legally held arms. The machines were purchased with funds from the United States Government and the German Government through a partnership between the East African Community and the German Agency for Technical Cooperation. The arms-marking exercise is in line with the requirements of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and

the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa. Marking ensures enhanced stockpile management and easy tracing of arms.

Finally, RECSA supported seven countries in developing their national action plans on small arms control and management. Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania have had their plans in place for a number of years, and implementation is in progress. Rwanda and Burundi completed their plan development process in a year and are now embarking on implementation. The Djibouti draft document is currently under discussion. The Eritrea document is under review by the national team. The next country of focus for national action plan development is Ethiopia. These strategies will, in addition to addressing other issues on small arms, guide countries when conducting disarmament exercises.

RECSA would like to thank Member States for their support — in particular the Government of Kenya for hosting the Secretariat, and the Governments of the United Kingdom, Germany through partnership with the German Agency for Technical Cooperation, the Netherlands, Norway, the United States of America, Japan, Belgium and Canada, as well as the United Nations Development Programme for funding activities to fight the proliferation of illicit small arms in the Great Lakes region, the Horn of Africa and bordering States.

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the final statement on regional disarmament and security. We will now take up the theme of disarmament machinery, beginning with a panel discussion.

I would like to welcome our panellists here today: His Excellency Mr. Christian Strohal, President of the Conference on Disarmament; His Excellency Mr. Andrzej Towpik, Chairperson of the Disarmament Commission; Ms. Carolina Hernandez, Chairperson of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters; and Ms. Theresa Hitchens, Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research.

As usual, I invite our panellists to limit their statements to no longer than 10 or 15 minutes. Unfortunately, today we will only be able to hear one statement because, as I announced earlier, at 12.30 we

will have the certificate awarding ceremony for Disarmament Fellows.

Before giving the floor to the first of our panellists, I shall suspend the meeting in order to continue our discussion in an informal setting.

The meeting was suspended at 12.20 p.m. and resumed at 12.35 p.m.

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): Two representatives have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. Since this is the only meeting of the day, statements in right of reply would normally be made at the end of this meeting. I propose, with the consent of representatives, to grant the right to reply before proceeding with the awards ceremony for the disarmament fellows, which will take place on an informal basis and the meeting will be suspended at that time. Unless I hear any objection, I shall now call on those representatives who have requested to speak in right of reply.

Mr. Gheghechkori (Georgia): We would like to reply to the statement made earlier today by the representative of the Russian Federation, in which he referred to the events of August 2008.

One thing that we cannot refute — and we agree with the Russian delegation on this — is the general assessment that the event was definitely an aggression. But with respect to all the other parts of the statement, we must state that it simply does not correspond to reality. The aggression, as everyone knows, was committed by one sovereign State against another sovereign State — namely, by the Russian Federation against Georgia. As all the facts and evidence indicate, that aggression was not started on 8 August 2008, but was a long, well-prepared process that escalated to the degree of armed conflict in August last year.

Once again, we have witnessed here, as usual, an attempt by the Russian Federation to distort the facts. Here, I would refer to the report of the independent fact-finding mission — the so-called report Tagliavini report. I have read the report very thoroughly, and I could not find anything in it to justify Russia's accusing Georgia of aggression against parts of its territory. So I would advise the Russian delegation to reread the report very carefully, to study it carefully and to draw the appropriate conclusions.

To the contrary, all the evidence and facts that are cited in the report confirm the other interpretation of

the events that happened in August last year. In particular, the report makes clear that the events of 7 and 8 August were just an episode of a longer cycle of provocation, above all by the Russian side. The report confirms that ethnic cleansing against Georgians took place and that the Russian allegation of genocide is total nonsense. The report also unveils Russia's illegal activities in the period leading up to the war and confirms that Russia breached international law in attacking Georgia. So, overall, in its entirety, the report talks about the invasion by one country of another sovereign country and neighbour.

We could also draw further conclusions that the irresponsible, negligent, inappropriate and disproportionate actions of our northern neighbour on Georgian territory led to casualties and to the escalation of the situation to the level of military conflict and war. Let us not forget that it was the Russian Federation that invaded the territory of a sovereign country, Georgia, and not the other way round.

Furthermore, in conclusion, I would like to comment on the further reference that my Russian colleague made with regard to the proposals for the new European security architecture. The Georgian delegation has participated in that process, which was begun in Corfu, Greece, earlier this year. We, too, think that there is definitely a need to improve the European security architecture, but the only reason for doing so is because some countries still fail to comply with their earlier obligations and commitments. That was also confirmed by the vast majority of delegations present at the Corfu ministerial conference of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Thus, we once again call on our Russian colleagues to abandon attempts to distort the historical facts and to comply with their obligations under international law.

Mr. Vasiliev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, I would like to comment on the way in which our meeting is being conducted. I believe that we have already concluded consideration of regional disarmament and security and have already heard two speakers in the next thematic discussion. I would therefore ask the United Nations Secretariat and the Committee Secretary to follow our rules of procedure more carefully.

With regard to the substance of the remarks made by the representative of Georgia, I, too, agree with him on an issue, namely, that whoever wants to learn about the reasons and the consequences of the conflict, and about who launched the aggression, can look at the report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the causes of the conflict in the Caucasus. The mission was headed by Heidi Tagliavini and its report was drawn up in accordance with a decision of the European Union. The report is over 1,000 pages long, and those of us in this room and beyond can draw their own conclusions from it. I believe that those opinions will not be the same as those we have just heard from the representative of Georgia.

In conclusion, I appeal to all those present to preserve the constructive climate that has marked the progress of the current session of the First Committee. Bearing in mind that lunchtime is approaching, I would like to wish *bon appétit* to all delegations, including the delegation of Georgia.

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): Before we proceed, allow me to remind delegations that, in accordance with the rules of procedure, the right of reply must be accorded at the end of each meeting. Thus, requests to speak in the right of reply are to be granted at the end of the meeting at which they were made.

However, since we are now going to proceed to the presentation ceremony of the Disarmament

Fellowship certificates, a few minutes ago I consulted with representatives, obviously with their agreement, on whether it was appropriate to grant the right of reply before proceeding to that ceremony, given that the ceremony will take place not within the formal meeting of our Committee, but informally, and that in a few minutes we will not have interpretation service, which should not prevent us from continuing with the award ceremony but poses a difficulty for representatives taking the floor. By common agreement, we proceeded to accord the right of reply before beginning the ceremony. Once again, I thank representatives for their understanding and cooperation.

We shall now to proceed to a very special event for us all. As I stated earlier, the ceremony of presentation of the 2009 United Nations Disarmament Fellowship certificates will now take place. I would ask all delegations to remain in their seats for the ceremony in order to congratulate and encourage our young colleagues. We will have the benefit of interpretation for at least the first part of the ceremony.

I shall now suspend the meeting in order to proceed with the ceremony in an informal mode.

The meeting was suspended at 12.50 p.m. and resumed at 1.05 p.m.

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): We have thus concluded our work for this morning.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.