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First Committee

17th meeting

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Official Records

Chairperson: Mr. Marco Antonio Suazo (Honduras)

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

The meeting was suspended at 3.20 p.m. and resumed at 4.20 p.m.

Agenda items 81 to 96 (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*): This afternoon, the Committee will conclude its thematic discussion on regional disarmament and hear statements from the Directors of the three Regional Centres in Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, and Africa, and from the Chief of the Regional Disarmament Branch of the Office for Disarmament Affairs. We will also hear the remaining speakers on the topic of disarmament machinery.

I give the floor to the Secretary to make an announcement.

Mr. Sareva (Secretary of the Committee): I would like to inform representatives that the first three oral statements pertaining to draft resolutions A/C.1/63/L.6, A/C.1/63/L.11 and A/C.1/63/L.31 are now available for pick-up at the Secretariat, in room S-2977H. These statements will also be posted on QuickFirst.

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): Our first speaker is Ms. Agnès Marcaillou, Chief of the Regional Disarmament Branch of the Office for Disarmament Affairs. I will suspend the meeting in order to continue our discussions in an informal setting.

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now call on those speakers wishing to make statements or introduce draft resolutions on regional disarmament and security.

Mr. Guimarães (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on the issue of regional disarmament and security on behalf of the countries of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) and its associated States: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela and my country, Brazil.

Twenty-one years ago, the General Assembly, by its resolution 41/60 J, established the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, with its headquarters in Lima, Peru. It is the only one of the three centres of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs whose mandate includes the implementation of measures to promote not only peace and disarmament, but also economic and social development.

That additional mandate has enabled the Regional Centre to carry out activities that go beyond the specific area of disarmament and to establish cooperative relations with a number of United Nations agencies. In addition, the Regional Centre works in close contact with civil society organizations to promote and integrate disarmament issues into the development programmes of States in the region.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.



Since its establishment, the Regional Centre has demonstrated that, despite its limited human and financial resources, it is an institution that assists all States of the region in promoting security, disarmament and development at the subregional and regional levels. Through all these years, the Regional Centre has supported States of the region in implementing numerous regional disarmament initiatives with a clear approach to development, as well as confidence-building measures, incorporating issues related to disarmament and development, and improving public security.

In that regard, the Regional Centre has supported public security initiatives in the region by organizing seminars on firearms legislation. A recent example was the regional seminar held in Rio de Janeiro on 11 and 12 June on the marking and tracing instrument.

The Regional Public Security Training Centre, established in Brasilia, Brazil, in December 2004 with the support of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, supports the implementation and development of public security projects and activities in Latin America and the Caribbean. Among the Training Centre's most important contributions are the regional and national exchanges resulting from the shared experiences of organizations and individuals working in public security in our countries.

MERCOSUR and its associated States highlights the contributions of the Regional Centre in training the participants in courses on such issues as civil security, new tracing techniques and intelligence in the fight against illicit firearms trafficking. However, improving the coordination of initiatives and activities in that area among the countries in the region remains a challenge for us. That is why we rely on the assistance of the Regional Centre.

The Regional Centre, in coordination with international organizations, has supported initiatives proposed by member States to promote and implement multilateral instruments for the disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their delivery systems, which pose a threat to international peace and security.

In the area of firearms, ammunition and explosives, the Regional Centre has been promoting

cooperation aimed at improving existing controls over their legal trade and preventing their illicit trafficking.

MERCOSUR and its associated States have taken note of the Secretary-General's proposal, contained in his report in document A/63/157, that Member States may wish to consider alternative means of ensuring stable core funding for the Regional Centre. We share the view that that would allow the Centre to focus on seeking funding for projects of interest to the region. Lack of the necessary core financial resources could seriously hinder the Centre's ability to efficiently carry out its mandate and respond to the increasingly diversified and numerous requests from States. In that connection, we welcome Peru's initiative to submit a draft resolution requesting the Secretary-General to provide the necessary support, charged to the regular programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011.

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): Before we proceed to the next speaker, I would kindly ask members to show respect by remaining silent and maintaining order in the room so that we can give speakers our full attention.

I call on the representative of Angola to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/63/L.46.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): Let me start, Sir, by congratulating you and all the other members of the Bureau for the wise manner in which you have been conducting the work of our Committee.

My delegation associates itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the African Group. I would also like to seize this opportunity to thank Mrs. Marcaillou, Chief of the Regional Disarmament Branch of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, and Ms. Jacqueline Seck Diouf, Director of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, whose briefings we have just heard, for the commendable and good work they have been undertaking. I would also like to thank the Directors of the Regional Centres in Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. That is indeed a good investment in peace, in which we must continue to invest seriously.

I am particularly delighted by the opportunity I am offered today, in my capacity as representative of the Chair of the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, to update representatives on the activities of the Committee.

This body was established by the Secretary-General on 28 May 1992 under the terms of General Assembly resolution 46/37 B, and is composed of the 11 member States of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). Its main goal is to put in place confidence-building measures, work towards the decrease of armaments in the region, and promote regional economic and social development. The Committee is therefore an instrument of preventive diplomacy, with a view to preventing conflicts within and among its member States.

The Committee meets regularly twice a year. On each occasion, it meets initially at the expert level, with the participation of civil and military high-ranking officials, and subsequently at the ministerial level, with the participation of ministers of external relations and defence. It can also meet at the level of heads of State and Government.

At its ministerial meetings, the Committee has examined and adopted recommendations aimed at preventing the eruption or resurgence of conflicts and restoring peace in situations of open conflict. The Committee also discusses measures or initiatives to promote interactive cooperation in the security domain, share experiences on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes for ex-combatants, and examine ways and means of implementing the various international instruments relating to disarmament and non-proliferation in Central Africa. In addition, a number of seminars or conferences on various topics related to issues of peace and security in Central Africa have been organized by the Committee.

The following are some of the Committee's achievements so far: the signing of a non-aggression pact in Yaoundé, Cameroon, on 8 July 1996, and the creation of an early warning mechanism for Central Africa, with its headquarters in Libreville, Gabon, the Central Africa Multinational Force, the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa, and the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa.

Since its inception, the Committee has undeniably played a pivotal role in the prevention of conflicts by member States, providing an adequate venue where civil and military senior executives, as well as ministers in charge of foreign affairs and security, meet regularly to exchange views on the relevant issues of peace and security. Those meetings

set the stage for the prevention or alleviation of tensions and strengthening confidence among member States, as well as for the adoption of measures or initiatives aimed at ensuring the safety of regional borders.

At the 27th ministerial meeting of the Committee, held in Luanda from 13 to 15 May 2008, Angola was elected Chair of the Advisory Committee. I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to thank the countries of the Central African region for the confidence placed in my country. We commend Cameroon for the outstanding work it has carried out as the Committee's retiring Chair.

The Chairman of the Luanda meeting focused particularly on the situation prevailing in countries emerging from conflict. Pertinent recommendations were formulated, aimed at strengthening the cooperation of the subregion with the international community in the promotion and consolidation of peace. Other relevant questions were also addressed, such as the problem of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, the disarmament of civilians, and the implementation of the Sao Tome Initiative, which calls for the elaboration of a code of conduct for security and defence forces of Central Africa and of a legal instrument for the control of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa.

During its mandate, Angola will continue to encourage member States to spare no effort in dealing with any relevant situation that constitutes a threat to the peace, stability and security of the subregion. The harmonization of the activities of the Committee with those of the ECCAS is also an aspect that will be at the centre of the Angolan chairmanship.

At the initiative of Angola, a deliberation on the future of the Committee and the rationalization of its activities was launched. That will be further reviewed during the 28th meeting, which is due to take place in Libreville later this year. Given the importance of the Sao Tome Initiative, that will be a central point on the agenda that the Angolan presidency intends to implement or see implemented.

I would like to conclude by thanking once again the United Nations Member States, as well as the intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, for their support for the activities of the Advisory Committee. In that connection, I wish to introduce and to encourage all member States to adopt without a vote,

as they have in previous years, draft resolution A/C.1/63/L.46, entitled “Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa”.

Mr. Kyaw Zwar Minn (Myanmar): I would like to begin by welcoming the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (A/63/178).

Today, the world is faced with challenges that have direct bearing on the maintenance of international peace and security. We believe that the Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament help to meet the challenges we face by contributing substantially to fostering a climate of understanding and cooperation among States in the areas of peace and disarmament. The Centres not only provide education on disarmament and non-proliferation, but also function as a forum for States in the region to interact on security issues of regional and global concern.

Last year, at the sixty-second session of the General Assembly, we welcomed the relocation of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific to Kathmandu. We are happy to note that the Centre has been operating well since its inauguration in August 2008. We would like to express our appreciation for the efforts of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. We thank in particular the Government of Nepal for its timely financial contribution to support the local staff members of the Centre, thereby ensuring the sustainability of its operations.

We commend the important work done by the Centre over the past year in promoting international and regional dialogue on disarmament and non-proliferation. The conferences held in Japan and the Republic of Korea offered participants from Governments, non-governmental organizations, academia, research institutions and international and regional organizations an opportunity to discuss various issues on disarmament and non-proliferation.

We are confident that the Regional Centre, which is strategically located in the region, will effectively serve the needs of the 43 countries that form its constituency. The active role of the Centre as the primary United Nations regional entity for

disarmament and security will promote and enhance dialogue at the subregional and regional levels through the organization of meetings and conferences on disarmament-related issues.

The Centre’s capacity to function effectively on a sustainable basis will depend largely on the resources made available to it. Myanmar shares the view, expressed in the Secretary-General’s report that sporadic and insufficient core funding has a direct impact on the sustainability and quality of the activities and services provided by the Centre. It is our hope that adequate resources from the regular budget as well as from voluntary contributions will be made available to the Centre.

Mr. Tarar (Pakistan): Global peace and security depend in large measure on stability at the regional and subregional levels. Instability at the regional and subregional levels spawns arms races and undermines the international community’s efforts aimed at arms control and disarmament.

On the other hand, States engaged in a bilateral process of confidence-building fail at times to register progress on arms control and disarmament measures because of the extraregional concerns of one or both parties. Such roadblocks can be removed only through effective measures for disarmament and arms limitation at the global level, both in the field of weapons of mass destruction and in the area of conventional arms. It was for that reason that, in 1993, the Disarmament Commission recognized that regional and global approaches to disarmament and arms limitation complement each other and that both should be pursued simultaneously in order to promote regional and international peace and security.

Confidence-building measures in the realm of security at the regional level must be tailored to the specifics of the region and should begin with simple arrangements on transparency, openness and risk reduction before the States concerned find themselves in a position to pursue more substantive arms control and disarmament measures. However, regardless of the specifics of various regions and the steps that the States concerned undertake for confidence-building, the ultimate aim of regional approaches should be to enhance regional and global peace and security.

If that is to happen, regional confidence-building measures in the realm of arms control and disarmament should be aimed at preserving a balance in the defence

capabilities of States at the lowest level of armaments. That would place a special responsibility on militarily significant States and States with larger military capabilities to promote agreements for regional peace and security.

Moreover, regional arrangements for disarmament and arms limitation should give priority to the elimination of the most destabilizing military capabilities and imbalances. It is also imperative to recognize the intrinsic link between strategic and conventional stability. A stable balance of conventional forces is necessary to ensure strategic stability, particularly in tense regions. The massive induction of sophisticated weaponry increases conventional asymmetries and forces greater dependence on nuclear and missile deterrence.

Confidence-building measures are significant in that they can lead to the creation of favourable conditions for the peaceful settlement of existing international problems and disputes and facilitate the solution of any situation that might lead to international friction. However, confidence-building measures should not become ends in themselves; they should be pursued in conjunction with earnest efforts for the peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with the United Nations Charter. The peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter and other concrete actions to ease regional tensions and build confidence among the States of the region can create a political environment conducive to promoting agreements on disarmament and arms limitation.

Without progress in eliminating underlying disputes and causes of mistrust between States, the utility of confidence-building measures will diminish. Confidence-building measures alone cannot act as a substitute or a precondition for steps towards the peaceful settlement of disputes.

As it did last year, the delegation of Pakistan has submitted draft resolutions on regional disarmament (A/C.1/63/L.8), conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels (A/C.1/63/L.9) and confidence-building measures in the regional and subregional context (A/C.1/63/L.10). Those 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 those draft resolutions by the General Assembly this year.

In South Asia, we are pursuing a composite dialogue process, which includes confidence-building measures in the nuclear and conventional fields. A number of confidence-building measures are operational, including the establishment of hotlines and agreements on pre-notification of the flight-testing of ballistic missiles and on reducing the risk of accidents relating to nuclear weapons.

Pakistan believes that it is time to advance from risk reduction to restraint and the avoidance of an arms race. For that purpose, we have proposed the establishment of a strategic restraint regime in South Asia with three interlocking elements: conflict resolution, nuclear and missile restraints and conventional balance. The attainment of the objectives of the regime can be facilitated through parallel progress towards the resolution of outstanding disputes in our region.

The international community has an important role to play in the promotion of regional peace and security in various parts of the world, including South Asia, by doing the following. First, we must support and promote a comprehensive approach to peace and security and adopt an equitable approach. Secondly, we must avoid policies that create nuclear disparities and thereby undermine strategic stability in a region. Thirdly, we must discourage the introduction of destabilizing weapon systems, which can lead to an arms race and undermine military balance. Fourthly and finally, we must agree on measures for progress in the field of arms control and disarmament at the global level to create an environment conducive to substantive restraint measures in various regions.

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

The Republic of Azerbaijan actively participates in joint efforts to address 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 consider it important to take a number of steps to achieve peace and stability in our region. First and foremost, the region should be free of weapons of mass destruction. The development of regional relations in line with the norms of nuclear non-proliferation under international law is a precondition for ensuring and strengthening stability at the regional and global levels.

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

Over the past decade, Armenia has intensively built up its military presence and capability in the Nagorny Karabakh region and other occupied territories of Azerbaijan. An analysis of the data indicates that, during this period, the number of unaccounted for and uncontrolled arms in the occupied territories has increased consistently. According to our information, Armenia is hiding up to 316 tanks, 324 armoured combat vehicles and 322 artillery systems in our occupied territories. That equipment must be counted against Armenia's maximum allowed holdings levels. It is obvious that our neighbour has exceeded its ceilings more than two-fold, thereby seriously altering the military balance in the region in its favour.

As a consequence, a great deal of undeclared treaty-limited equipment has been accumulated in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. The occupied territories of Azerbaijan provide Armenia an opportunity to use repair facilities and, moreover, to transfer and hide undeclared treaty-limited equipment from the Conventional Forces in Europe community. That endangers not only the national security of Azerbaijan, but also the stable development of the whole region.

The statements of Armenian officials are full of accusations towards Azerbaijan about its allegedly militaristic intentions and armaments race. The Armenians are stirring up hysteria about Azerbaijan's oil revenues, which are supposedly being used for military purposes only.

With regard to the increase in Azerbaijan's military budget, as we have stated previously, that is a matter of the country's overall economic development and the general increase in the State budget. In terms of

quantitative indicators, we are not exceeding the usual peace-time expenditure norms, despite the fact of the occupation and the undeclared war. It should be taken into account that a considerable part of expenditures goes to the salaries, housing and other social needs of military personnel. Moreover, a comparative analysis shows that, in correlation to its population, Armenia is much more militarized in terms of the number of military personnel and the quantity of armaments. Armenia's military budget accounts for 3.86 per cent of its gross domestic product, while Azerbaijan's is 3.26 per cent. We understand the real reason behind Armenia's misinterpretation, which has been expressed at every international forums. The purpose is to create a smokescreen for its intentions in the occupied territories and to win time.

Despite the fact that Azerbaijan is in a state of war and its territories are under occupation, we are continuing to fulfil our commitments under the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. During the past five years, in order to conform to the limits set by the Tashkent Agreement, Azerbaijan destroyed or reduced the number of more than 150 treaty-limited armaments and equipment.

In conclusion, I want to declare that, as long as Armenia continues to follow its aggressive policy, any talk of peace, stability and all-inclusive cooperation in our region is irrelevant. Armenia should first of all ask itself about the reasons for such a situation.

Ms. Blum (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of my delegation, I should like to express our gratitude for the important contributions made by the various directors of the Regional Centres.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Brazil on behalf of the member States of the Common Market of the South.

My delegation would like to refer to the Regional Centres for Peace, Disarmament and Development that have been established by the United Nations in various parts of the world, in particular the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Centre's work to develop the train-the-trainers programme and the support it has provided for the holding of training courses in that regard have been especially valuable.

I would also like to emphasize the importance of coordination among the different United Nations offices operating in the region. The establishment of synergies between them and the use of their technical and administrative infrastructure are critical to supporting national programmes and projects. I should like to share my country's experience in that regard with the Committee about.

Colombia is an example of synergies. In 2005, my country began consultations with the Centre with the aim of benefiting from training courses. The United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) participated in those consultations. The Government of Colombia and UNODC signed an agreement under which training courses have been held, with technical and financial support from the Regional Centre.

Colombia appreciates such cooperation from those agencies of the United Nations system, as well as the support of donors that have allocated resources for national training courses. We especially appreciate the support of the Netherlands, which we have enjoyed since this initiative began, as well as the assistance provided by Canada and Belgium.

The Regional Centre for Latin America and the Caribbean is called on to play an increasingly active role in supporting cooperation and monitoring mechanisms and in following up the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects at the national, bilateral, subregional and regional levels.

We appreciate the project proposals for assistance made by the Regional Centre for the period 2008-2011 with regard to developing public security and disarmament instruments and policies, which our authorities are currently considering. Colombia is interested in having the Centre's support in carrying out some national projects.

We are certain that the Centre will continue to work together with States to meet their specific needs. We reaffirm our willingness to cooperate to that end.

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Algeria to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/63/L.18.

Mr. El Hadj Ali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the sponsors, it is both an honour and a

privilege for the delegation of Algeria to introduce to the First Committee once again this year a draft resolution entitled "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region", contained in document A/C.1/63/L.18. By regularly introducing this draft resolution, the sponsors both demonstrate their resolute commitment to making the Mediterranean region an area of peace and stability and reiterate their desire to work actively to maintain international peace and security. The annual introduction of the draft resolution also allows them to express their desire to promote cooperation and solidarity in that region of the world. It also reflects the growing awareness of the close ties that exist between both shores of the Mediterranean.

The draft resolution retains the content of the resolution adopted at the previous session and attempts to encompass a wide range of issues linked to the strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region. It emphasizes the indivisible character of security in the Mediterranean region and recalls the range of initiatives undertaken by Mediterranean countries to consolidate peace, security and cooperation.

It reaffirms the responsibility of all States to contribute to the stability and prosperity of the Mediterranean region and their commitment to respecting the principles of the Charter of the United Nations as well as the provisions of the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States.

The draft resolution also stresses the fundamental principles guiding the continuing efforts by Mediterranean countries to contribute to the elimination of all causes of tension in the region and to the promotion of just and lasting solutions to the persistent problems of the region through peaceful means. It calls for the elimination of economic and social disparities and for the promotion of mutual respect and greater understanding among the peoples and cultures of the Euro-Mediterranean region in order to strengthen peace, security and cooperation.

The text calls on those States in the region that have not yet done so to adhere to all the multilaterally negotiated legal instruments related to the field of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation and encourages all States to promote the establishment of

confidence-building measures as well as openness and transparency.

The draft resolution also encourages States in the region to strengthen further their cooperation in combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, taking into account the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, and in combating organized crime, illicit arms transfers and illicit drug production, consumption and trafficking, which pose a threat to peace and stability.

This year, we felt it was appropriate to introduce a new fifth preambular paragraph welcoming the holding of the Summit that brought together Euro-Mediterranean partners on 13 July 2008 in Paris, where they adopted a joint Declaration on strengthening the Barcelona Process through the Union for the Mediterranean.

Finally, as in previous sessions, the sponsors remain confident that the draft resolution will enjoy the valuable support and consensus of all members of the Committee.

Mr. Borg (Malta): My delegation would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election and to commend you for the manner in which you have conducted the proceedings of the Committee to date.

Malta aligns itself with the statement to be made by the representative of France on behalf of the European Union (EU). I would, however, like to make some additional remarks.

The First Committee is the perfect platform in the annual sessions of the General Assembly in which all States Members of the United Nations are given the opportunity to discuss not only matters related to global disarmament, but also urgent and pressing issues concerning international security, in particular regional issues, including those affecting the Mediterranean region.

The Mediterranean region epitomizes many of the thorny and multifaceted problems related to socio-economic and political instability. Since Malta gained its independence in 1964, we have striven hard to take a proactive role in the endeavour to promote security and cooperation in the region. Thirty-three years ago in Helsinki, the States participating in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe — now the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe — formally affirmed, at the instigation of Malta, the

inextricable link between Mediterranean and European security. Since then, Malta has continuously worked to ensure that that affirmation finds its place in every international forum, including the General Assembly.

It is also important to recall that it was in the Assembly that, for a number of years, Malta introduced and piloted the draft resolution that the Committee will once again be recommending for adoption by the plenary. As one of the sponsors of the draft resolution on the strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region, Malta pledges its continued contribution towards that end. Here, I would like to thank Algeria, a Mediterranean and neighbouring State, for its work in piloting the draft resolution.

Malta is a firm believer in the initiatives and processes of inclusion that various organizations and institutions have set in motion in order to bridge the gap within that strategically divided area. Throughout the years, Malta has actively participated in supporting the valuable contributions being made at the regional level by diverse Mediterranean institutions and initiatives, including the Mediterranean Action Plan of the United Nations Environment Programme, the Mediterranean Forum, the Five plus Five process, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Parliamentary Assembly for the Mediterranean. Malta therefore looks forward to working closely with other Euro-Mediterranean partners in the Barcelona Process/Union for the Mediterranean, to which Malta has submitted its bid to host the seat of its secretariat.

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, or Barcelona Process, launched in 1995, establishes a comprehensive partnership among participants through strengthened political dialogue, the development of economic and financial cooperation and greater emphasis on the social, cultural and human dimensions that are the three fundamental aspects of the Partnership. Malta believes that the Euro-Mediterranean process is making an important contribution and honouring the commitment to reducing the economic and social disparities that for many years have been and continue to be a source of the destabilizing factors of the Mediterranean region. As a member of the European Union, Malta continues to strongly support the enhancement of the process, which provides for and offers new and innovative opportunities to reinforce the much-needed cooperation and collaboration between and among all Mediterranean States.

Among the issues that have continued to have a critical impact in advancing the Barcelona Partnership are the difficulties still being faced by all concerned in searching for a durable solution to the Middle East situation, particularly to the core question of Palestine. At the same time, it is satisfying to note that important progress has been achieved in that regard over the past few months.

As emphasized by the Prime Minister of Malta in his statement to the General Assembly during this year's general debate (*see A/63/PV.12*), important developments have taken place regarding the negotiations for a permanent settlement of the Palestinian question. The Annapolis Conference, held in November 2007, renewed hope for an otherwise bleak future with regard to the resolution of this question. Moreover, the Paris International Donors' Conference for the Palestinian State, the formal start of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and the series of meetings between Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas have given a most welcome meaning to the efforts being made to resolve all outstanding issues, including all core issues without exception.

Malta believes that every possible avenue must be pursued to ensure that the efforts being made by all parties concerned with the full support of the international community are translated into tangible and long-term results. Malta is convinced that it is only through constructive dialogue that an agreement between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority can be reached, thus ensuring a just and lasting peace for all peoples in the region.

Earlier this year, the Government of Malta hosted the first-ever EU-League of Arab States Foreign Affairs Ministerial Meeting, with the participation of the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy and the Secretary-General of the Arab League. In their joint communiqué, the participants stressed the need for a dialogue between the 27 EU member States and the 22 States members of the League of Arab States. They also expressed their strong belief that the meeting between the EU and the League of Arab States in Malta provided a useful and constructive opportunity for open dialogue on enhanced cooperation regarding regional and global issues of common concern. The EU-Arab League meeting built on and

sought to strengthen interregional, regional and bilateral relations.

In that regard, we look forward to the international ministerial conference "Europe and the Arab World — Connecting Partners in Dialogue", to be held in Vienna next month. We also view Egypt's proposal to hold, in Cairo, a meeting of foreign ministers on a European Union-League of Arab States dialogue as an important follow-up to the Malta meeting. Those meetings enhance the dialogue between two very important protagonists in the region and serve as building blocks for a reinvigorated partnership.

In discussing the political, economic and social realities of the Mediterranean riparian States, my delegation cannot but bring to the attention of this Committee an emerging and alarming phenomenon that is directly affecting Malta today. I refer to the serious question of the influx of irregular migrants that is impacting negatively on the limited resources of small countries like Malta. This year so far, Malta has already received 2,522 boat people aboard 80 boats. This phenomenon in the Mediterranean and its serious impact on Malta demand concerted action by all with a view to securing an appreciation of the seriousness and urgency of the issue. Malta remains wholly committed to honouring its international obligations in addressing that pressing humanitarian problem.

At the same time, Malta welcomes the adoption of the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum, which will contribute to a holistic approach to tackling illegal and legal immigration. Moreover, Malta looks forward to working closely with countries of origin and transit and within the context of the Pact to resolve the problems faced by certain countries, including Malta, in the short and long terms.

Let me conclude by underscoring that Malta will remain deeply committed to maintaining its vocation and role as a proactive force for peace, stability and prosperity in all relevant forums, and will seek earnestly to ensure that Mediterranean issues are always given the importance they deserve on the agenda of international organizations. Indeed, Malta's accession to the European Union has definitely complemented our deep and sustained engagement with Mediterranean issues and appreciation of the region's intricate politics and sensibilities.

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Peru to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/63/L.13.

Mr. Chávez (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, Sir, allow me to express my pleasure at seeing a representative of a Member State of our region presiding over our work, to wish you the best of luck and to reiterate our full support. I also extend our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

On this occasion, I would like to highlight the fact that, since its creation by the General Assembly on 3 December 1986, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean has supported innumerable subregional and regional initiatives related to regional disarmament, with a clear view towards development. This broad background of experience and activity has been very positive in affirming the commitment of the States of the region to international peace and security. Moreover, the Regional Centre is the only one of the three Regional Centres whose mandate includes not only the implementation of measures in support of peace and disarmament, but also the promotion of social and economic development.

That additional mandate and its common policy within the United Nations system has allowed it to develop activities that go beyond the narrow field of disarmament by establishing relations of cooperation and synergies with other agencies of the United Nations, such as the Office on Drugs and Crime, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the United Nations Development Programme, among others; with such international organizations as the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the World Customs Organization and INTERPOL; as well as with non-governmental organizations. Likewise, the Regional Centre works closely with civil society organizations to promote and integrate disarmament issues into the development activities of each State of the region.

Over the past 21 years, the Regional Centre has assisted States of the region in various initiatives, including those directed towards disarmament, continuously and effectively integrating the theme of disarmament into sustainable development; promoting and implementing multilateral instruments of the disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass

destruction and small arms; setting standards for confidence and security-building measures; assisting States in matters of firearms, ammunition and explosives by promoting ways to improve current controls in their lawful trade and prevent illicit trafficking; improving public security; creating space for debate, assistance and cooperation among the States of the region on disarmament and security issues; and establishing a culture of peace, to mention only the most relevant.

All these actions and initiatives have been possible thanks to voluntary contributions whereby the Centre has shown throughout these years that, despite its limited financial and human resources, it has become a relevant, viable and efficient institution assisting all States of the region in the promotion of security, disarmament and development at the subregional and regional levels.

Voluntary contributions have drastically diminished since last year, while States' requests are ever more numerous and diverse, affecting the Centre's capacity to respond efficiently to those requests owing to a lack of reliable sources of resources. That is why it is particularly important to provide a regular budget to the Centre that will assure its normal ability to respond fairly to the requests of each and every country of the region in the future.

The financial sustainability of the Regional Centre deeply concerns the countries of our region. That is why, on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, I refer in particular to the draft resolution entitled "United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean", contained in document A/C.1/63/L.13, under agenda sub-item (c) of item 90. The draft resolution is the outcome of an in-depth exchange of views on alternative methods to assure reliable core funding for the Regional Centre, in follow-up to the recommendations contained in the recent report of the Secretary-General (A/63/157).

The draft resolution requests the Secretary-General to provide, from the biennial regular budget starting in 2010-2011, the necessary support to ensure the sustainability of the core activities and operations of the Regional Centre in order for it to carry out its programme of activities in accordance with its mandate.

To invest in regional centres is to invest in peace and regional and international security. I therefore trust that, as in previous years, we will be able to count on the valuable support of all delegations to ensure that the draft resolution is approved by consensus.

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Nepal to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/63/L.42.

Mr. Acharya (Nepal): My delegation has the honour to introduce a draft resolution, under sub-item (f) of agenda item 90, entitled "United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific", contained in document A/C.1/63/L.42.

The sponsors of the draft resolution are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Maldives, Micronesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nauru, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam, as well as Nepal, the host country of the Centre. My delegation expresses its sincere gratitude to all those sponsors and those delegations that will co-sponsor this resolution.

While global instruments on disarmament and non-proliferation are stagnant, Regional Centres could play a significant role in promoting confidence at the regional and subregional levels. My delegation sincerely believes that regional initiatives to establish intensified dialogue and interactive processes with all concerned stakeholders on both the governmental and non-governmental levels will serve as building blocks to the global disarmament agenda.

My delegation welcomes the relocation of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific from New York to Kathmandu and its becoming operational on 18 August 2008. We wish to thank the Secretary-General and the Office of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for the smooth relocation of the Centre, per the mandate of the General Assembly, the Host Country Agreement and the memorandum of understanding signed between the Government of Nepal and the Secretariat last year. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all representatives, individually and collectively, for their support and cooperation in this process.

As the Host Country of the Regional Centre, Nepal is committed to lending its full support for the enhanced and constructive role of the Centre by

consolidating the Kathmandu process so that it can contribute to peace and disarmament in the region by building a renewed sense of confidence and understanding.

In draft resolution A/C.1/63/L.42, besides including factual and technical updates, we have proposed preambular and operative paragraphs with a view to reflecting the context of the relocation of the Centre. In this regard, I would like to express my gratitude to those delegations that attended the informal consultations that we convened last week on this subject. The draft takes into account the valuable suggestions that some participants here today provided during the informal consultations. Among other things, we have taken into account the important suggestion of the Secretary-General regarding the need to provide for core funding for the Centre's staffing and operations. The formulation in paragraph 5 regarding the regular budget was agreed upon in informal consultations so that we could have a chance to consider some regular funding for the Regional Centre from the biennial regular budget starting in 2010-2011, as was informally agreed in the case of the Regional Centre in Lima. I am pleased that this draft finds a consensus among us, and I am counting on representatives' support for its adoption by consensus.

The lofty goals of peace, disarmament and non-proliferation will not be achieved at the regional level without effective programmes in this area. The Regional Centre's programmes are conducted from resources generated from voluntary contributions that are by no means sufficient to sustain its activities in mandated areas. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Governments and donors that have provided resources and staff to the programmes and activities of the Regional Centre in Asia and the Pacific. I would also like to take this opportunity to urge Member States to generously contribute to the Centre's programmes so that it can fulfil its objectives and mandates effectively.

As in previous years, I would like to request that the Committee adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): We have concluded our thematic discussion on regional disarmament.

The Committee shall now continue its thematic discussion on disarmament machinery.

I call on the representative of the Netherlands to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/63/L.48.

Mr. De Klerk (Netherlands): I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/63/L.48, entitled "Report of the Disarmament Commission". I do so not only on behalf of my own delegation, the Netherlands, but also on behalf of the delegations of Armenia, Benin, Brazil, Cameroon, Croatia, France, Guatemala, Peru, the Philippines and Uzbekistan, together forming the extended Bureau of the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

The Disarmament Commission held its organizational session for 2008 on 18 March 2008, and during that meeting it considered questions related to the organization of work and substantive agenda items for its 2008 substantive session, in accordance with the adopted ways and means to enhance the functioning of the Disarmament Commission, and in the light of resolution 62/54.

The Commission approved its general programme of work for the session and decided to allocate four meetings to a general exchange of views, and it also decided to establish Working Group I to deal with the first substantive item on the agenda, "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons", and Working Group II on "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons".

The Commission held seven plenary meetings, and, assisted by the Bureau, I held informal consultations with the membership on the framework and organizational elements for the possible participation of experts in the work of the Commission. I presented an informal paper on this participation on 24 April to the Committee of the Whole.

Working Group I held 12 formal meetings between 9 and 24 April. Furthermore, the Chairman of Working Group I conducted informal consultations with various delegations and regional groups. Two working papers were submitted by the Chairman and discussed in the Working Group. Working Group II held 10 meetings between 9 and 22 April. Three conference room papers were submitted by the Chairman and discussed in the Working Group.

Unfortunately, no consensus was achieved in either Working Group. I would nevertheless like to take this opportunity to thank both Chairmen, Mr. Jean-Francis

Zinsou of Benin and Mr. Carlos Perez of Brazil, and the Bureau for their relentless efforts to arrive at agreed recommendations. I also would like to thank High Representative Sergio Duarte and the staff of the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.

With the conclusion of its 2008 substantive session, the Disarmament Commission has come to the end of the current three-year cycle. In accordance with resolution 61/67, draft resolution A/C.1/63/L.48 recommends that the Commission include in its agenda for 2009 an item entitled "Elements of a draft declaration of the 2010s as the fourth disarmament decade". It also recommends that the Commission intensify consultations with a view to reaching agreement on the remaining agenda items before the start of its substantive session in 2009. These consultations might be conducted by the present Bureau or by the Bureau that is to be elected in the coming month.

The urgency of the issues before us is increasing and we should seize the opportunity of having fruitful multilateral dialogue in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation in this important deliberative body. Looking ahead, the Commission needs to engage in informal consultations and determine how we can go from deliberating to delivering. I believe that we can do that if we focus our attention on particular areas where win-win situations can be created.

Let me conclude by expressing my hope for constructive consultations in the next few months that will bring an agreed agenda for the forthcoming session in 2009. That would be a good start. I hope that draft resolution A/C.1/63/L.48 will enjoy consensus support as in previous years.

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/63/L.47.

Mr. Mundaraín Hernández (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour and privilege for me to present the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/63/L.47, entitled "Report on the Conference on Disarmament", on behalf of the delegations of Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The structure and content of the draft resolution were based on

resolutions of previous years, which were adopted without a vote.

First of all, I should like to call attention to the preambular section of the draft resolution. As in previous years, the Conference adopted a substantive report (A/63/27) for the General Assembly on its annual session that reflects its work in 2008 and expresses its determination to move ahead with substantive work.

The positive developments in the Conference in 2008 are reflected in the sixth and seventh paragraphs of the preamble, which stress that the constructive contributions of members made it possible to carry out various activities aimed at renewing negotiations on important disarmament issues in the Conference.

The eighth preambular paragraph stresses the shared sense within the Conference of the urgent need to commence substantive work to address the transcendent questions on the agenda of the Conference and to fulfil its mandate as a negotiating body.

The ninth preambular paragraph recognizes the declaration of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the addresses of Ministers for Foreign Affairs and other high-level officials expressing support for the endeavours of the Conference.

The tenth preambular paragraph is dedicated to the revitalization of the disarmament machinery.

I should like to underline the content of paragraphs 3 and 4 of the draft resolution. Paragraph 3 refers to the collective interest of the Conference to build on the increased level and focus of its activities through 2008 and to commence substantive work as soon as possible during its 2009 session. Paragraph 4 relates to the work of the Conference during the intersessional period and uses the same text as the resolution of last year. As the experience of previous years has demonstrated, such consultations between current and incoming Presidents and the membership of the Conference can promote and facilitate substantive progress in the subsequent year.

I must point out that, while this year's efforts have allowed some progress to be made, the Conference on Disarmament still lacks a programme of work that would allow it to resume substantive work. This is due to a number of factors, including a lack of sufficient political will and flexibility on the part of the

Conference's membership, arising from an absence of confidence and transparency and from the security and defence priorities of member States.

I take this opportunity to put on record that, in my role as President, I was able to rely on the vigorous support of all this year's 2008 Presidents of the Conference. Similarly, I must pay tribute to the cooperation provided by the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, and the team coordinated by Deputy Secretary-General Timothy Caughley, who have invested their authority, experience and expertise in revitalizing the Conference.

I am also encouraged by the willingness of the delegation of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam to take the reins of the Conference on Disarmament in 2009. It is also comforting to know that, under the guidance of the incoming presidency, the six Presidents of 2009 are already working in close consultation. This is a promising sign for our work over the year to come.

On behalf of all of the sponsors of the draft resolution, I call on the Committee to adopt this text without a vote.

Mr. Etensel (Turkey): I should like to extend my sincere gratitude to the panellists for the presentations they made yesterday and to pay tribute to their leadership in the challenging task of revitalizing the multilateral disarmament machinery. I also acknowledge the representative of Venezuela, who spoke yesterday and today.

Turkey favours global and complete disarmament and supports all efforts in the field of sustaining international security through arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament. Turkey believes that global challenges require global solutions. Needless to say, global problems cannot be solved unilaterally, bilaterally or by small circles of likeminded nations. Effective multilateralism is necessary and achievable.

A multilateral disarmament machinery is still up and running. The General Assembly and its First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations Disarmament Commission are all part of this complex machinery. Turkey considers that the Conference on Disarmament has a leading role to play in addressing the security challenges confronting our nations. No one questions the importance of the

Conference on Disarmament as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. In recent years, considerable momentum has been created within the Conference. However, in spite of many attempts, it has not been possible to overcome the decade-long stalemate in which the Conference continues to languish.

During Turkey's presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, a compromise package contained in document CD/1840 has been submitted on behalf of the 2008 Presidents of the Conference. We continue to hold the view that members of the Conference may wish to take advantage of this opportunity by commencing negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty and bringing up any issues that they may deem relevant during the negotiations. The Conference may eventually take new initiatives in other areas, including parallel advances on negative security assurances and the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Turkey, as one of the 2008 Presidents of the Conference, strongly believes that the so-called "P6" platform has proved to be an effective instrument for coherently and successfully steering the Conference on Disarmament. We warmly welcome the intention of the incoming Presidents to continue this practice and wish them every success.

In his opening statement to the Conference on Disarmament at the beginning of 2008, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon reminded us that the Conference's "successes are distant memories". Turkey sincerely hopes that the current stalemate will become a distant memory in the near future.

Turkey wishes to take this opportunity to reiterate its position regarding the expansion of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament. We believe that expansion does not constitute a priority at this stage. Furthermore, we feel that it should be addressed on a case-by-case basis, with due consideration given to the contributions of candidates to international peace and security.

The current disarmament machinery has been able to craft significant obligations and commitments in the field of disarmament. However, we believe that this machinery could do better.

Let me conclude with some memories from ancient history. The ancient city of Gordium is located in Central Anatolia, Turkey. Representatives may recall

that the problem of untying the Gordian knot resisted all attempted solutions until Alexander the Great cut through the knot with a sword. No member of the disarmament community needs to take a sword in his hand. The sword is already in our hands, and it is called political will.

Mr. Langeland (Norway): Multilateral approaches to disarmament and non-proliferation are essential to developing, maintaining and further strengthening fundamental norms. In our general statement to the Committee, we noted that, while important progress had taken place in one negotiation process, there was a standstill in others.

A milestone was achieved this year through the adoption of the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Dublin. The Convention strengthens international humanitarian law and provides a framework for implementation. The process towards the adoption of the cluster munitions Convention clearly demonstrates that multilateralism works. What is required is innovative approaches involving all relevant stakeholders and the mobilization of the political will and determination necessary to move forward. While recognizing that other negotiating processes may be different in nature, we believe that important lessons may be drawn from the humanitarian disarmament approach.

Let me address some areas that are still plagued by standstill and run the risk of being marginalized. The Conference on Disarmament certainly belongs to that category. As long as there is no consensus on a programme of work, the Conference cannot move forward with negotiations on the much-needed fissile material cut-off treaty. Norway urges Conference members — especially those that have not yet joined the consensus on a programme of work — to demonstrate flexibility and allow the Conference to what it is intended to do. Again, negotiations are not the same as consenting to a specific outcome.

It should be borne in mind that the Conference on Disarmament is not an end in itself. If that body remains paralysed, there will be stronger calls for the consideration of other avenues in order to move the disarmament process forward.

Another body that is not performing as well as it should is the Disarmament Commission. Again this year, we saw that the Commission could not agree on any substantive recommendations. The Commission is

intended to be a deliberative body, yet few countries find it useful enough to send experts from their capitals or from Geneva to the sessions of the Commission.

If we are to maintain that institution, we should engage in an honest debate on its working methods. The Disarmament Commission must provide added value. At this stage, let me make some preliminary suggestions, such as for a shorter Commission session, with a focus on one or two topics clearly defined by the General Assembly. In addition, the report of the Commission does not necessarily have to be a negotiated document; a Chair's summary should suffice. The Disarmament Commission is, after all, a deliberative body. We hope that the Commission will engage in an in-depth self-evaluation at its next session.

It has been affirmed that deep reforms can take place only within the framework of a possible fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV). Norway would be more than pleased if we had a consensus on the modalities and format of such a conference, which could ignite a new momentum for multilateralism. To that end, Norway has previously provided financial support to enhanced consultations on a possible SSOD-IV. On the other hand, we would run a considerable risk by calling for such a conference if it could fail. An SSOD-IV would have to be well prepared.

In anticipation of a possible SSOD-IV, we should seek to make improvements, where possible, in the functioning of the multilateral machinery. One area is, of course, the functioning of the First Committee. Given its universal nature, we consider this body of the General Assembly to be fundamental in advancing the cause of disarmament and non-proliferation.

We have seen progress in the way the First Committee works, but more needs to be done. This year, we will take action on 58 draft resolutions and decisions. Some of these are repetitive. We reiterate our view that, when a resolution has been adopted, it will stand unless otherwise decided. My delegation hopes that, to the extent possible, we can reduce the number of repetitive resolutions.

In every session, we notice that tremendous efforts are put into mobilizing co-sponsorships. We should ask ourselves whether aiming for the highest possible number of sponsors is the best way to make use of the four weeks available to us.

Lastly, we should continue efforts to enhance the engagement of civil society in the work of the First Committee. Although non-governmental organizations do not always agree with our positions on certain draft resolutions, we greatly value their active engagement.

Mr. Lasloom (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my delegation associates itself with the statements made yesterday by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Gulf Cooperation Council and by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Since this is the first time that I have taken the floor during the present session, permit me, Mr. Chairperson, to express my delegation's gratitude for your efforts in guiding the work of the Committee. We also wish to sincerely thank the other members of the Bureau and of the Committee secretariat, who are helping to guide our work towards the outcome to which we all aspire.

It goes without saying that one of the greatest threats to the survival of humankind is the existence and potential use of nuclear weapons, in clear violation of international law and thus of humanitarian law. It also goes without saying that the complete elimination of nuclear weapons is the only way to guarantee the non-use or non-threat of use of such weapons.

If we are to attain that noble objective, we must recognize that the issues of non-proliferation and disarmament are closely linked. Thus, we must make resolute progress towards achieving disarmament and non-proliferation by following the guidelines set out by the international community in 1978 in the Final Document adopted at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (resolution S-10/2). The Document defined priorities, including that of working to achieve the disarmament of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, such as chemical weapons, which can also cause enormous damage.

The United Nations disarmament mechanism is the ideal framework for achieving disarmament. If that mechanism is to be effective, it must employ diplomatic and peaceful means and follow the principles of multilateralism and participation. In addition, each component of the mechanism must play its role effectively through cooperation.

The Saudi Government has demonstrated its commitment in form and substance by honouring the disarmament principles defined by the international community, having acceded to a number of treaties and conventions in that area. We have closely followed the work of the Security Council Committee created pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), and we are providing complete information about the regulations in force in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia regarding mechanisms governing the use of weapons.

Today, we are discussing disarmament mechanisms and their importance within the United Nations. However, the peoples of the Middle East, who long for peace and stability, have an important question to ask the international community. The peoples of the region want to know why Israel is the sole obstacle to the establishment of the Middle East as a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Knowing full well that its nuclear facilities pose a threat to peace and security in the region, Israel has not acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons or submitted its nuclear facilities to the inspection regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency. The international community must provide a full response to the demands of the peoples of the region.

The international community must abandon its policy of double standards that allows Israel to be exempt from international pressure, thus blocking the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. That policy sends the wrong message to Israel,

which thus continues to procrastinate and play the role of the tearful victim, like one who, in the well-known Arab saying, strikes me then rushes home before me to cry in my place.

The Government of Saudi Arabia, which supports the right of all States to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, including the right to pursue nuclear knowledge and technology for peaceful ends, takes seriously Iran's undertaking to fully and diligently honour its commitments to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We hope that these commitments will be translated into concrete actions that ensure the Iranian nuclear programme crisis is positively and swiftly brought to an end.

The Chairperson (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with our programme of work, at its next meeting the Committee will continue its thematic discussion on disarmament machinery and hear presentations from representatives of non-governmental organizations on issues related to nuclear weapons, outer space and conventional weapons.

We are scheduled to begin taking action on draft resolutions on Tuesday, 28 October. Representatives have before them an information sheet prepared by the Secretariat regarding the ground rules for taking action on draft resolutions, which outlines the basic rules of procedure that we will follow.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.