The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda (continued)

The Chairman: Members of the Commission may recall that, at our organizational meeting on 15 January 2009, the Commission took note of the document containing the draft agenda and decided that the necessary additions would be made to it at a later stage. I hope that the Commission will today formally adopt a completed version of the draft agenda, which will be issued tomorrow, 16 April, as an official document under the symbol A/CN.10/L.62/Rev.1.

Allow me to read out the additions that will be made to paragraphs 4, 5 and 6 of the draft agenda. Paragraph 4 will read “Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons”. Paragraph 5 will read “Elements of a draft declaration of the 2010s as the fourth disarmament decade”. Paragraph 6 will read “Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons [This item will be taken up upon the conclusion of the elements of a draft declaration of the 2010s as the fourth disarmament decade, preferably by 2010 and in any case no later than 2011]”.

Unless I hear any objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the draft agenda I have just read out, which will appear tomorrow as an official document under the symbol A/CN.10/L.62/Rev.1?

The agenda was adopted.

Organization of work (continued)

The Chairman: The Commission’s programme of work will be issued tomorrow. I wish to inform members that, in accordance with the programme of work and prior agreement, there will be no meetings at the United Nations on Friday, 17 April in observance of Orthodox Good Friday.

I should also again like to urge all regional groups to submit, as soon as possible, their candidates for the chairs of the two working groups, namely, on nuclear issues and on the draft declaration.

General exchange of views

The Chairman: I should like to remind members that we agreed yesterday that the deadline for inscription on the list of speakers in the general exchange of views would be today at 1 p.m.

Mr. Kleib (Indonesia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at this year’s session. We are confident that, through your able stewardship, this session of the Commission will contribute to fulfilling the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly. We would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election.

NAM welcomes the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and appreciates his statement underlining the historical achievements and continued importance of the Commission as part of the
disarmament architecture of the United Nations. In that regard, it is NAM's wish that all Member States abide by their commitment to the norms and principles of the Charter of the United Nations with reference to disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as the established norms of international law.

NAM emphasizes that progress on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects is essential to strengthening international peace and security. The disarmament agenda has been stymied in recent years, but recent developments, including statements on nuclear disarmament by a number of States, including nuclear-weapon States, have brought these issues to the fore and created an opening for progress. Notable efforts by the Russian Federation and the United States should reflect positively on progress in the field of nuclear disarmament.

There have also been positive developments in the Conference on Disarmament, with the efforts of the Conference's 2009 Presidents to find a solution to the programme of work. We are therefore optimistic that our goals of disarmament and non-proliferation may be progressively fulfilled in the coming years. The Commission can play an important role in that regard.

The Movement appeals to all States to pursue and intensify multilateral negotiations, as agreed by consensus in the Final Document (resolution S-1012) of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, with a view to achieving nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

We feel that the work of the Disarmament Commission is important and that it can be very effective, as evidenced by numerous productive sessions at which it has been able to reach consensus on guidelines for establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones and on conventional arms control, among other issues. The work of the Commission has been critical to the emergence of universally accepted principles in the field of disarmament. We see the deliberative function of the Commission becoming more important than ever. NAM remains firmly committed to the basic purposes and principles of the Disarmament Commission and reaffirms its centrality.

NAM also reiterates the importance and relevance of the Disarmament Commission as the sole specialized deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament apparatus. It reaffirms that the Commission should play a unique role within the United Nations disarmament machinery as the only body with universal membership that allows for in-depth deliberations on specific issues leading to the submission of concrete recommendations on those issues.

NAM supports the agenda of the Disarmament Commission for the new cycle beginning this year, which has its basis in General Assembly decision 52/492 and resolution 61/67. In the light of our preference to address two agenda items in any given year, we encourage all States to work as diligently as possible in order to conclude work on the agenda item on the disarmament decade as soon as possible.

The third agenda item, on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons, will be taken up upon the conclusion of the elements of a draft declaration of the 2010s as the fourth disarmament decade, preferably by 2010 and in any case no later than 2011.

With regard to the item entitled “Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons”, NAM has reiterated its principled positions, as reflected fully by the relevant documents adopted at the NAM summits and ministerial meetings. The Movement also maintains that the objectives and principles of the Final Document of the first special session on disarmament remain relevant.

All members of the Commission should fulfil their disarmament obligations and prevent nuclear proliferation in all its aspects. In its efforts to achieve global non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament, global and regional approaches, where appropriate, combined with confidence-building measures, should be pursued simultaneously.

NAM reiterates that nuclear disarmament constitutes its primary disarmament objective and remains its highest priority. The slow pace of progress up to this point is noted with concern. It is hoped that progress will accelerate in coming months. In this context, the Movement underscores the need for nuclear-weapon States to implement the unequivocal undertaking of accomplishing the total elimination of nuclear weapons and underlines the urgent need to commence negotiations without delay.

NAM also reiterates that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against
the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. We reiterate our conviction that, pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, efforts for the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States should be pursued as a matter of priority.

The Group continues to consider the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, in accordance with the principles and recommendations adopted by consensus by the Commission, as a positive step towards attaining the objective of nuclear disarmament. NAM welcomes efforts aimed at establishing new nuclear-weapon-free zones, including in the Middle East, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the concerned States of the region, and calls for cooperation and broad consultation on this goal.

NAM again calls for an international conference, at the earliest possible date, with the objective of attaining an agreement on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified time frame in order to eliminate all nuclear weapons; prohibit their development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer and use or threat of use; and provide for their destruction.

NAM believes that the efforts of the international community aimed at non-proliferation should be parallel to simultaneous efforts aimed at nuclear disarmament. NAM also reiterates its long-standing position in favour of the total ban of all nuclear testing and expresses concern over the lack of concrete progress by nuclear-weapon States in eliminating their nuclear arsenals. While noting early indications with regard to the ratification process of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by some States, we hope that this will be followed by tangible steps.

With respect to the agenda item “Elements of a draft declaration of the 2010s as the fourth disarmament decade”, the first disarmament decade, the 1960s, set an ambitious agenda for the cessation of the Super Powers’ arms race, nuclear disarmament and the elimination of weapons of mass destruction.

These nuclear goals were not realized in that decade or the following, but the 1978 special session on disarmament concluded a Final Document on a strategy for general and complete disarmament with effective international control, fundamentally aimed at eliminating the danger of nuclear war and implementing measures to halt and reverse the arms race. The Final Document of that special session remains the only consensus document of universal acceptance in the field of disarmament.

In the 1980s, the second disarmament decade was launched and sought not only to halt or reverse the arms race, but also to conclude agreements on the arms race in accordance with the objectives of the 1978 Final Document; to strengthen international peace and security, in accordance with the United Nations Charter; and to reallocate resources from military to development uses, in the understanding that peace and development are indivisible.

The 1990s witnessed the formation of the third disarmament decade, in which confidence-building measures, dialogue and negotiation were leveraged to their full extent, noting the profound relationship between disarmament, social and economic development and environmental protection. That decade pursued the goal of reductions in and elimination of nuclear weapons and a comprehensive nuclear test ban, and promoted the peaceful uses of nuclear technology as an inalienable right of States, under agreed international safeguards.

We shall soon enter the fourth disarmament decade, 2010-2020, in which we seek to build on the goals and progress of the previous decades and, at this critical juncture and diplomatic opening, to leverage our ability to make progress on initiatives already begun. In this regard, NAM believes that the elements of a draft declaration of the fourth disarmament decade shall reflect not only its priority on nuclear disarmament, but also relevant issues in the field of disarmament, including the issue of small arms and light weapons.

Multilateral cooperation is a necessity in pursuing the goals of disarmament and non-proliferation. A true sense of mutual respect and understanding, give-and-take and prudent flexibility are needed to achieve our goals and the tasks mandated to this Commission.

Finally, NAM would like to reiterate its readiness and support in working with you, Sir, and the Bureau for a successful session this year.

Mr. Obisakin (Nigeria): On behalf of the African Group, I take the floor to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as the Chairman of this deliberative body
on disarmament. Your effort at achieving the consensus agenda attests to your diplomatic credentials. We also wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

The African Group wishes to align itself with the statement just made by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Africa reiterates its conviction as follows. Nuclear weapons still represent the greatest threat to humanity. We therefore call for the achievement, at the earliest possible time, of the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) with a view to promoting, without further delay, the fulfilment of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

All nuclear-weapon States should show due diligence in implementing all their obligations under the NPT and other international obligations, desist from developing new types of nuclear weapons and conclude legally binding, unconditional negative security assurances to non-nuclear States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Multilateral diplomatic negotiation, under the provisions of the United Nations Charter, remains the most effective means for achieving credible universal nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in order to safeguard and strengthen international peace and security.

The current global financial crisis has further strengthened the urgency of the need for all stakeholders to redouble their efforts to revive all disarmament machineries with a view to breaking the impasse that has characterized it for almost a decade.

While noting the unique and important position of the Disarmament Commission as the main deliberative body on disarmament in multilateral diplomacy, Africa laments the failure of this body to reach consensus on any substantive issue over its past two cycles, the most recent of which ended in April 2008.

The African Group calls on all States Members of the United Nations to demonstrate sufficient political good will, requisite flexibility and deep understanding with a view to achieving concrete recommendations on disarmament in order to further enhance the international peace and security currently needed everywhere for development in the world of today. However, Africa welcomes the entry into force of the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia on 21 March and looks forward to the entry into force of the Pelindaba Treaty and to the ratification of its relevant protocols by our respective countries. Africa calls on all States, especially the nuclear-power States, to support us in this effort to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa.

In this connection, Africa reiterates its support for the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. We believe that, as a priority step to this end, there is an urgent need to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East in accordance with existing United Nations resolutions.

The African Group reiterates the importance of the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral negotiating body for disarmament. In this regard, we welcome the recent proposal for a programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament made by the Chair of the Conference last March. We urge members of the Conference and the broad membership of the United Nations to show their support for this important, balanced and consensual draft programme of work which, we believe, could lead to the commencement of negotiations within the Conference on decisive issues in the field of disarmament.

With respect to conventional weapons, Africa, having perhaps one of the highest number of victims of the illegal trade, circulation and manufacture of small arms and light weapons, takes note of and hopes for a successful completion of negotiations on the ongoing Open-ended Working Group Towards an Arms Trade Treaty and other related forums on combating illicit small arms and light weapons.

Mr. Tarragô (Brazil): My delegation’s remarks are made in addition to the statement that Mexico is preparing on behalf of the Rio Group, which will be delivered later today.

Mr. Chairman, I wish to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of this year’s substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. Brazil appreciates your efforts to achieve a consensus on an agenda for the Commission. You can be assured of my delegation’s full support for you and the other members of the Bureau as you discharge your duties.

I also take this opportunity to thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ambassador Sergio Duarte, for his opening remarks and for his
continued commitment and efforts to support Member States in their endeavours in the field of disarmament.

Brazil believes that the Commission has an important role to play within the United Nations disarmament machinery. Since the Commission’s creation, it has produced several useful guidelines and principles that prepared the ground for multilateral negotiations on disarmament issues. As a deliberative body with universal participation dedicated to long-term discussion of disarmament issues, it does not operate under the constraints that characterize negotiations of legally binding agreements. One should take advantage of this aspect of the Commission’s role and of its relevance as a forum for Member States to explore new avenues towards disarmament. It is up to all of us to seize this opportunity and to work towards achieving concrete outcomes in the Commission’s deliberations.

Nuclear disarmament is an issue of utmost priority. That has been reflected in the work of the Disarmament Commission and was formally mandated under General Assembly decision 52/492, which establishes that at least one of the Commission’s main substantive agenda items shall comprise an issue related to nuclear disarmament.

In this context, I would like to highlight that the Commission meets in a particularly auspicious moment. The recent statements made by authorities of the nuclear-weapon States at the highest level rekindle hope and provide a stimulus for Member States to fully engage in the discussions on disarmament and non-proliferation. My delegation expects these positive signals to lead to concrete actions.

Brazil is particularly encouraged by the possibility that the necessary ratification processes of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty may be concluded soon, which would lead to its entry into force. Equally auspicious would be progress in the negotiations towards a verifiable treaty to end the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons use.

As we begin this new three-year cycle, it is helpful to recall that progress on disarmament issues requires a balanced and integrated approach. Resolution 61/67 mandates the Disarmament Commission to “prepare elements of a draft declaration of the 2010s as the fourth disarmament decade”. In order to fulfil this mandate, the Commission should not only take stock of the commitments made by Member States in previous decades, but also consider the challenges ahead. From Brazil’s perspective, the declaration should reflect the priority that we all place on nuclear disarmament. It should also address other relevant issues in the field of conventional weapons, and in particular small arms and light weapons. Furthermore, adequate attention should be given to the conclusion of an effective arms trade treaty. The indispensable role of the United Nations framework in dealing with peace and security issues in accordance with the Charter should also be reaffirmed.

The Disarmament Commission has considered the issue of confidence-building measures in the 2001-2003 cycle and, more recently, in the last cycle, 2006-2008. Despite our efforts, an agreement on guidelines and recommendations on this matter remains elusive. It is important to highlight that confidence-building measures seek to alter inaccurate perceptions and to avoid misunderstandings about military actions and policies that might otherwise lead to conflict. They can gradually foster stable political and diplomatic relations and transform parties’ ideas about their security needs. They can even encourage initiatives to identify shared security interests in a manner conducive to a better appreciation of the importance of effective disarmament.

In concluding, Mr. Chairman, I wish to assure you of my delegation’s readiness to work with you and with the members of the Bureau for a successful outcome at this session. The time is ripe for the Commission to take decisive steps to reach substantive results.

Mr. Liebowitz (United States of America): It is a great pleasure, Mr. Chairman, to see you leading our session. The United States delegation has been especially impressed by the time and energy you have devoted to efforts to reach agreement on an agenda and programme of work for this session of the Disarmament Commission. I can assure you of the United States delegation’s full support during the time remaining in our session.

The Commission is meeting at a particularly auspicious moment, just a short time after President Obama’s groundbreaking speech in Prague on non-proliferation and disarmament. His commitment that the United States will “seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons” was widely applauded around the world.
In his speech, President Obama described the steps that the United States would take on the road to that goal. They include reducing the role of nuclear weapons in the United States national security strategy; negotiating a new strategic arms reduction treaty with Russia this year; pursuing “immediately and aggressively”, as the President put it, ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty — as President Obama said, “it is time for the testing of nuclear weapons to finally be banned”; negotiating a new treaty that verifiably ends the production of fissile materials intended for use in State nuclear weapons — what we in this room know as a fissile material cut-off treaty; and strengthening the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

In that regard, President Obama referred to the basic bargain contained in the Treaty:

“Countries with nuclear weapons will move towards disarmament, countries without nuclear weapons will not acquire them, and all countries can access peaceful nuclear energy.”

He then described several principles to accomplish the task of strengthening the NPT: more resources and authority to strengthen international inspections, what he described as “real and immediate consequences” for States that violate the rules, and the building of a new framework for civil nuclear cooperation. President Obama also stressed the need to ensure that terrorists never acquire a nuclear weapon and outlined steps that the United States would take, in conjunction with other States, to “secure all vulnerable nuclear material around the world within four years”.

It is in the light of President Obama’s speech that our delegation sees the agenda of this Commission. During our consideration of the first nuclear item on the agenda, “Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons”, the United States delegation intends to focus on how the nations represented here can begin to implement President Obama’s vision of a world without nuclear weapons. We will focus on the conditions necessary for such a world to come into being. For example, how can we assure the countries that possess nuclear weapons, as well as their allies, that their security will not be impaired as they reduce the numbers of nuclear weapons and their role in national strategies?

A second important issue is the verification requirements that will be necessary to ensure that no one is violating a total ban on nuclear weapons. Surely, verification is even more essential when we talk about very low levels of nuclear weapons or even none at all. In such circumstances, any violation of the non-proliferation and disarmament regime would be very serious. This body is not set up to consider the technical details of verification, but it might consider such important questions as the level of assurance necessary and the respective advantages of national and international means of verification.

Thirdly, we may wish to consider compliance mechanisms. Clearly, States will want to be sure that any violations will be met with the real and immediate consequences to which President Obama referred. As he also said, “we need a structure in place that ensures when any nation breaks the rules, they will face consequences”. Considering what such a structure might look like is another task for us, but without strong assurance that there will be consequences for non-compliance, verification measures have little value.

Those are difficult questions, and we doubt that the Commission will arrive at definitive answers, even in three years. But we might make a start — a real contribution to the discussion of this issue.

With regard to the second item on our agenda, “Elements of a draft declaration of the 2010s as the fourth disarmament decade”, the United States delegation believes that such a declaration should contain a small number of key principles of disarmament and non-proliferation. It should consider issues related to nuclear weapons, to other weapons of mass destruction and to conventional weapons. To be meaningful, it must take into account the need to establish a new security paradigm to replace nuclear deterrence as an essential step in creating the conditions for a nuclear zero. An essential aspect of this would be a strengthened non-proliferation regime that would serve to ensure that, as States eliminate their nuclear stockpiles, new nuclear-weapon States do not arise.

Since the Commission must adopt a report to the General Assembly by consensus — and do so quickly — delegations should seek areas of common understanding and not try to insert concepts that they know will not enjoy consensus.
Finally, our delegation notes that a consensus on taking up a conventional item this year was not possible. We strongly regret this, not only because we consider that previous decisions of the General Assembly clearly provide for both a nuclear and a conventional item to be considered each year, but also because issues of conventional disarmament, including confidence-building measures, transparency and verification, are, to many United Nations Members — perhaps the majority of them — of the greatest immediate interest.

When the Commission resumes its consideration of conventional disarmament in 2010 — as we strongly expect that it will — the United States will have suggestions to make, drawing on its own experience in that field. We hope that the discussion of that item will lead to agreement on concrete measures that Member States can then draw upon.

Mr. Chairman, the United States delegation wishes you every success in your conduct of the 2009 session of the Disarmament Commission. I extend that to the other members of the Bureau as well.

Mr. Amil (Pakistan): It is a pleasure for the Pakistan delegation to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, the Vice-Chairs and the other members of the Bureau on their election to positions of high responsibility in the Disarmament Commission. Pakistan attaches high importance to the Commission as the specialized deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery. This important forum enables the United Nations membership to hold in-depth deliberations on disarmament issues leading to concrete recommendations. In consonance with our national policy, we assure you of our utmost cooperation towards ensuring the success of the 2009 substantive session, as well as the remainder of the current cycle.

We align ourselves with the group position of the Non-Aligned Movement so succinctly presented by the representative of Indonesia.

Since the epoch-making first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, in 1978, the lofty ideals of disarmament and international security have frequently been tested. We have seen the cherished goal of equal security for all being eclipsed by unilateralism, narrow geographical groupings and inadequate attention to the security concerns of the developing countries. It is crucial to understand the security compulsions that underpin a developing country’s desire to buttress its military capability at the cost of its social and economic development.

While it is encouraging to see signs of improvement in the quest for the cherished goal of disarmament, a lot of work needs to be done. But above all, the world needs a genuine revival of the political will that gave us SSOD-I to ensure that the objectives of its momentous Final Document (resolution S-10/2) do not remain confined to United Nations documents.

Besides the unfulfilled promise of disarmament, we continue to see nuclear weapons occupying a central place in military doctrines. It is important for us to remember that the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons should not be relegated to the sidelines due to real and imagined non-proliferation fears. Only through an equitable approach and genuine empathy for the security concerns of all States can we hope to achieve nuclear disarmament. At the same time, we have to avoid discriminatory application of non-proliferation norms and the resort to military and coercive means to counter proliferation.

Pakistan’s proposal for convening a special international conference to evolve a new consensus on disarmament and non-proliferation stems from its desire to see a global disarmament and non-proliferation regime that is in consonance with realities on ground. Such a consensus can be worthwhile only if it: first, revives commitment by all possessor States to bring about complete irreversible and verifiable nuclear disarmament; second, makes non-proliferation norms non-discriminatory; third, normalizes the relationship of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) with non-NPT nuclear-weapon States; fourth, eliminates vertical proliferation; fifth, ensures fulfilment of every State’s right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy; sixth, addresses the question of missiles in all respects, including the deployment of anti-ballistic missile systems; seventh, prevents militarization of outer space, including development of anti-satellite weapons; eighth, curbs numerical and technological escalation in conventional capabilities; ninth, ensures full implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons; tenth, rejuvenates the United Nations disarmament machinery, including the Conference on Disarmament, the Disarmament Commission and the First
Committee; and eleventh, addresses the question of fissile material on the basis of the mandate set out in the Shannon report (CD/1299) and the proposal made by the representatives of Algeria, Belgium, Chile, Colombia and Sweden — the five ambassadors’ (A-5) proposal — for a universal, non-discriminatory and multilateral treaty which is internationally and effectively verifiable.

Genuine international security can be ensured only by a holistic approach in which major Power eschew picking and choosing as per national agendas and national convenience. In this respect, regional approaches to security questions can strengthen such efforts at the global level. However, endeavours in this regard can be hamstrung due to procedural difficulties, as we have seen in the case of the agenda of the Disarmament Commission. It is worth remembering that the solution to global security concerns lies, inter alia, in strengthening the United Nations disarmament machinery, including the Disarmament Commission as the specialized United Nations deliberative body. Weakening these institutions by design or default will only exacerbate our problems. No extra United Nations mechanism can be a substitute for institutions that enjoy universal ownership and legitimacy.

Mr. Davide (Philippines): The Philippines congratulates you, Mr. Chairman, and the other members of the Bureau on your well-deserved election to lead this crucial session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. The Philippines is confident that under your able leadership and guidance this session will yield positive results. Likewise, it welcomes the statement made by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs (see A/CN.10/PV.291). The Philippines also associates itself with the statement delivered today by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Philippines sees a new ray of hope in the long-moribund state of cooperation in the field of disarmament. Now is the most propitious time for all nations to strive to achieve, through disarmament, our grand goal of global peace and even the survival of humankind. The aggravated threats to peace that torment us today and the fears of destruction that daily haunt humanity provide us with the best opportunity to behold the image of what was said so long ago by the prophet Isaiah: “They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (The Holy Bible, Isaiah 2:4). The most deadly swords and spears in any nation’s arsenal are nuclear weapons. The Philippines believes that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are both essential to promoting international peace and security. They are key building blocks of an age where nuclear arms will be things of the past. That is the age we all aspire to and wish to bequeath to the generations to come.

For the Philippines, the Disarmament Commission remains a vital mechanism in the field of disarmament. My country fully subscribes to the principles and objectives of this body and reaffirms its importance and continuing relevance, given its universal membership and its ability to submit substantive recommendations on urgent disarmament issues. Hence, the Philippines is concerned about the slow progress in the field of nuclear disarmament. Nevertheless, it is hopeful that progress will be achieved — and soon.

Accordingly, the Philippines submits that multilateral, regional and bilateral discussions should be continually undertaken as the tools to achieve success in this area. It calls on States to pursue multilateral negotiations, as agreed in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (resolution S-10/2).

The Philippines is a staunch supporter of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). It is host to three of the monitoring stations essential to the CTBT’s operations. Hence, the Philippines does not hesitate to call on all States to ban all forms of nuclear testing and urges those States whose signatures and ratifications are necessary for the Treaty to enter into force to sign and ratify it as soon as possible.

The Philippines respectfully submits that complete and total destruction of nuclear weapons is the best way to prevent their spread. The human family is not satisfied by mere reduction or non-proliferation. The existence of these weapons constitutes a continuing threat to the existence of the human family. Thus, the Philippines calls on States to fulfill their obligations and prevent the spread of nuclear arms. States, especially those that possess nuclear arms, must also do all they can to prevent non-State actors from acquiring such weapons.
The Philippines attaches due importance to the establishment of a universal legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States. Furthermore, it is convinced of the usefulness and necessity of nuclear-weapon-free zones and welcomes the establishment of more such zones; it calls on the nuclear-weapon States to respect these zones. The Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone — the Bangkok Treaty — is a significant contribution of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to this important effort. The Philippines welcomes the recent entry into force of the Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone. It looks forward to the early establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

The Philippines supports calls for an international conference that will set the parameters for the elimination of nuclear weapons and prohibit their production, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use, and provide for the destruction of such weapons. May this happen soon.

We are now about to enter what we look forward to being declared as the fourth disarmament decade. The work of our predecessors, which began in the late 1970s, must be continued and the success that was achieved from the first to the third disarmament decades has to be consolidated and built upon aggressively and progressively. The Philippines would therefore like to see the elements of a declaration on a fourth disarmament decade include relevant issues in the field of disarmament so that it will truly be a decade of more than just great promise.

On confidence-building measures (CBMs) in the field of conventional arms, the Philippines recognizes that CBMs are essential to the achievement of international peace and security. Conventional weapons, though not as destructive as nuclear weapons, have actually killed and maimed hundreds of thousands of people owing to their proliferation, widespread use and mass production. CBMs establish the climate of trust necessary to the reduction of tensions and the elimination of hostile situations. This in turn leads to more progress in terms of disarmament.

Lastly, the Philippines views multilateral cooperation as a key factor of disarmament. Through it, greater progress can be achieved.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the Philippine delegation would like to assure you and the other members of the Bureau of its readiness to participate in the most constructive and cooperative manner in this year’s substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.

Mr. Okuda (Japan): Let me begin by expressing my congratulations to Ambassador Andrzej Towpik of Poland on his assumption of the chairmanship of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. I would also like to congratulate Bureau members on their election. This year’s session of the Disarmament Commission marks a new departure, and Japan pledges to extend its utmost support to all of them.

The international community is currently under threat from nuclear weapons development, as demonstrated by one country’s unilateral declaration of withdrawal from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and proclamation of nuclear testing. We are also threatened by nuclear terrorism, as well as by the potential risks of covert nuclear weapons development under the guise of the right to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, which is built upon the NPT, is thus faced with grave challenges. Furthermore, despite international initiatives, including the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, the development and spread of ballistic missiles, which can be a means of delivery for nuclear weapons, continue to be a matter of concern.

On the basis of this awareness, Japan, as the only country ever to have suffered nuclear bombings, believes that a first step towards the total elimination of these weapons is for the entire globe to go beyond the positions of nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon States and embrace the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons. To achieve that goal, we should implement nuclear disarmament by taking a practical and incremental approach.

From this point of view, Japan submits annually to the General Assembly a draft resolution entitled “Renewed determination towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons”, and we welcome the current intensification of global movements aimed at achieving a world free of nuclear weapons, which has been invigorated by the recent joint statements of the Presidents of the United States and Russia and by President Obama’s speech in Prague calling for a world without nuclear weapons.
With respect to the practical and incremental approach, we would like first to highlight the importance of confronting the aforementioned challenges to the NPT regime. In order to enhance the credibility of the NPT, it is also vital for all nuclear-weapon States to faithfully implement their nuclear disarmament obligations under article VI of the Treaty. In this connection, we welcome the agreement at the United States-Russia summit meeting to conclude negotiations for a new treaty to succeed the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty by the end of this year.

Concerning the NPT itself, the success of next year’s Review Conference is a short-term imperative, and Japan is making efforts to contribute to a positive outcome, for example, by submitting working papers to last year’s Preparatory Committee, including one related to nuclear disarmament with a focus on improving transparency. In addition, the universalization of the NPT is essential. Moreover, we anticipate that the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, which was launched by Japan and Australia as a joint initiative and is a second-track enterprise involving various eminent persons, will produce a meaningful and action-oriented report towards the success of the Review Conference.

The realization of the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is also important, and we strongly hope that all the annex 2 countries, including the United States and China, will ratify the Treaty as soon as possible.

For the purpose of the early commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty at the Conference on Disarmament, Japan calls for the cooperation of all States members of the Conference to that end. Pending the entry into force of such a treaty, we urge all the nuclear-weapon States and non-NPT States parties to declare a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

I would now like to turn our attention to the issue of regional non-proliferation and the development of weapons of mass destruction. The early realization of the complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean peninsula through the Six-Party Talks is critically important to peace and stability in North-East Asia. On 5 April, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, disregarding the efforts of the international community, conducted a missile launch that was directly related to its ballistic missile development. That act, as indicated in the statement issued recently by the President of the Security Council, should be condemned, as it was clearly in contravention of relevant Security Council resolutions and damaging to regional peace and stability. Japan urges the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to comply fully with its obligations under those resolutions by taking concrete actions towards the comprehensive resolution of the nuclear and missile issues.

Additionally, the international community faces a grave challenge from the potential risk of covert nuclear weapons development by non-nuclear States parties to the NPT under the guise of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Japan is convinced that, if the aforementioned challenges are steadily addressed, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation will be comprehensively undertaken and the 2010s will have the potential to become a watershed decade for these issues.

Japan attaches great importance not only to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, but also to disarmament and non-proliferation in the fields of biological, chemical and conventional weapons. We firmly believe that the building of systems for improving transparency is important. With this in mind, we take special note of discussions in the Open-ended Working Group Towards an Arms Trade Treaty. Japan supports the idea of responsible transfers and hopes that a consensus will be formed on the essential elements of the arms trade treaty in the Open-ended Working Group.

This year, the meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is being held, and a meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts on the Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures is scheduled for next year. Japan attaches significance to the meetings of both Groups, which will assess the effectiveness of the relevant instruments and should result in reports presenting recommendations for improved implementation.

It has been 10 years since the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Based on the view that there remain challenges to its universalization, we
call on the non-States parties to reconsider the importance of the mine ban in the lead-up to the Second Review Conference.

We would like to commend the adoption of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Japan hopes that the Convention will quickly enter into force. To that end, we are currently in the process of ratifying the Convention. In addition, Japan also attaches great importance to the negotiations to establish a new protocol under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

In the area of small arms and light weapons, Japan is promoting the implementation of the Programme of Action through various measures, including the draft resolution that Japan submits each year in the General Assembly.

As I said previously, Japan believes that the 2010s have the potential to become an epochal decade for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. It is encouraging that the declaration of a disarmament decade has become one of the topics to be discussed during this year’s session of the Disarmament Commission. We hope that elements of a draft declaration will outline the broad areas of disarmament in a well-balanced manner. Japan also places great emphasis on disarmament and non-proliferation education, which focuses on the long-term future. That should also be included in those elements.

The Disarmament Commission formerly produced various guidelines and recommendations. In recent years, however, there have been no substantive outcomes. Japan hopes that efforts will be made to move forward through productive discussions during the Commission’s 2009 substantive session. In that respect, we support the Chairman’s inclusive approach.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (spoke in Russian): This session of the Disarmament Commission is taking place at a time when the word “crisis” is most often used to define the state of the world today. Unfortunately, the same word characterizes the current situation in the field of disarmament. Indeed, we are having serious difficulties reaching consensus on the core issues of the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda. Although the attempts of some groups of like-minded States to address problems by bypassing the existing disarmament forums could lead to some individual achievements, in the long term they will undermine established multilateral mechanisms and sow new elements of discord in the area of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, which is already full of contradictions.

At the same time, we see that the need to overcome the current intensive financial and economic crisis is uniting all States. We are forced to seek new approaches to resolving existing problems, which, in the end, must normalize the situation. It is clear that the time has come to search for such approaches in the field of disarmament as well.

We are convinced that deadlock can be overcome by stepping up multilateral diplomacy, strengthening active international disarmament mechanisms and establishing new ones as appropriate. Russia has always advocated the need to strengthen the central role of the United Nations, and primarily that of the Security Council, as well as the disarmament triad in maintaining peace and strategic stability.

I would like to note that we continue to remain committed to establishing a global security system based on respect for international law and States’ compliance with their obligations. To set up such an equitable system, consistent and vigorous steps in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation are required. In cooperation with our partners, we are ready to look for universally acceptable approaches to those issues, which are relevant to everyone.

The Russian Federation considers the Disarmament Commission to be an integral part of the United Nations multilateral disarmament mechanism, which was designed to provide recommendations to the General Assembly with regard to major disarmament and non-proliferation issues. Unfortunately, following the Commission’s previous three-year work cycle, no decisions on substantive agenda items have been adopted.

We welcome the fact that we have been able to reach agreement on the Commission’s agenda. That will allow for substantive discussion of the most pressing problems in the areas of multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation. In the light of the fact that we will focus on two issues at the 2009 session, I would like to refer to Russia’s approaches to the issues of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as to the elaboration of elements of a draft declaration of the 2010s as the fourth disarmament decade.
We reaffirm our commitment to nuclear disarmament. Moreover, we believe that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is possible only as the ultimate goal of a step-by-step process involving the participation of all nuclear-weapon States and on the condition that strategic stability is strengthened and the principle of equal security for all States is rigorously respected.

For Russia’s part, we are fully complying with our international obligations in that regard. We are reducing our nuclear arms well ahead of schedule. In 2001, we reached the target reduction levels for strategic delivery vehicles and warheads set out in the Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms. In accordance with the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-range and Shorter-range Missiles, Russia and the United States have totally eliminated two classes of such ground-based weapons. In addition, the implementation of the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty is well under way.

The statement of Russian Federation President Medvedev, read out at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva by Minister for Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov on 7 March, reflects Russia’s key approaches to the elaboration of a new comprehensive document with the United States on further mutual and controlled reductions in and limitations of strategic offensive weapons. In particular, Russia favours a legally binding agreement that limits not only warheads but also the means of their delivery — intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles and heavy bombers — and also excludes the possibility of deploying strategic offensive weapons beyond national territory.

At a meeting in London on 1 April 2009, Russian President Medvedev and United States President Obama adopted a joint statement expressing the mutual aspirations of the two countries to further proceed with the reduction and limitation of strategic offensive weapons. They agreed to launch talks on the issue while both parties strive to agree limits on strategic offensive weapons that are lower than the 1,700 to 2,200 warheads set out in the currently valid Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions. There is long and painstaking work ahead of us.

In that regard, I would like to emphasize that there is an indissoluble link between strategic offensive and defensive weapons, by which I mean anti-missile defence weapons. It is impossible to make meaningful progress in nuclear disarmament if that link is undermined by the unilateral development of strategic anti-ballistic missile systems. It can damage strategic stability and upset the system of checks and balances in the world. Russia is offering a constructive alternative to unilateral plans in this area — the pooling of efforts by all States to prevent potential missile threats. We firmly believe that anti-ballistic missile issues require a well-balanced approach that takes into account the fact that anti-ballistic missile defence may have a stabilizing as well as destabilizing impact on the strategic situation. We deem it necessary to find a proper balance between politico-diplomatic and military-technical means for neutralizing threats. We are ready to work with those who share our ideas and are prepared to act in a spirit of equitable partnership.

One of the fundamental mechanisms of the international security system is the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Right after the Commission finishes its work here in New York, the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference will begin its work. We are ready to do everything possible to ensure the most constructive and efficient outcome.

We hope that during the 2010 NPT Review Conference we will be able to reach consensus on understanding the challenges facing the international non-proliferation regime and to formulate a coordinated package of measures aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the Treaty. We need to see to it that all of its parties unconditionally implement their obligations on the basis of the indivisibility of three fundamental elements: non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful use of atomic energy.

We welcome constructive steps aimed at extricating the disarmament process from the prolonged crisis. At the same time, it is essential, in our view, to create an international atmosphere favourable to a complete renunciation of nuclear weapons with strengthened strategic stability and universal security. We expect to hold, during the 2010 NPT Review Conference, frank talks on the additional contribution that other nuclear States — not only the Russian Federation and the United States, but also other members of the NPT — can make to this process.

At the same time, we believe that the intensification of disarmament efforts is also a task for
States that remain outside the NPT. A goal on such a scale as reaching “nuclear zero” cannot be considered separately from other international problems, including the settlement of international conflicts, ensuring the viability of key disarmament and non-proliferation instruments, the withdrawal of all nuclear weapons to the territory of possessor States, the renunciation of the unilateral deployment of global anti-ballistic missile systems, the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and a verifiable cessation of the development of conventional capabilities.

We are convinced that the early entrance into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is of crucial importance for strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear arms limitation regime. For all its importance, the implementation of the moratorium on nuclear tests cannot replace the legal commitments under the CTBT. We welcome the intentions of the new United States Administration to review its attitude towards the CTBT with a view to submitting it for ratification. Russia ratified the CTBT in 2000 and calls on all States, especially those that are critical for the Treaty’s entrance into force, to sign and ratify it as soon as possible.

We support the idea of developing a global agreement on security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States, on the understanding that it should take into account cases when nuclear weapons can be employed in accordance with national military doctrines.

We also advocate the development of a treaty cutting off fissile material for weapons purposes within the framework of a balanced programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament. We believe that such a verifiable treaty could become a significant step in strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Russia continues to advocate strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime and, in this context, the need to enhance the efficiency of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system, inter alia through the universalization of the additional protocol to the safeguards agreement and the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions.

We believe that the NPT review process should, among other things, lay stress on issues related to providing unhampered access for all NPT parties to the benefits of the peaceful use of nuclear energy on the condition that they comply with all their non-proliferation obligations. These are the aims of the Russian initiative to develop a global atomic energy infrastructure and establish international centres for providing nuclear fuel cycle services. The first step in its implementation was the creation, in partnership with Kazakhstan, of the International Uranium Enrichment Centre in Angarsk. We welcome Armenia and Ukraine as members and the interest shown by a number of other countries. There are also plans to create, under the Angarsk Centre’s auspices, an IAEA-supervised buffer stock of low-enriched uranium to ensure guaranteed fuel supplies in case of a market failure. We are currently endeavouring in Vienna to move this initiative forward.

One of the top priorities of Russian policy in enhancing strategic stability and international security is the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space. We proceed from the assumption that it is easier to prevent the appearance of weapons in outer space than to get rid of new stockpiles of weapons afterwards. The Russian-Chinese initiative on developing a treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space has met with wide support, and only a small number of States at the Conference on Disarmament have spoken against launching the relevant negotiations. We are sure that the prevention of an arms race in outer space will enhance predictability in the strategic situation and contribute to the preservation of orbital property, which is, undoubtedly, in the interest of the enjoyment by all States of the benefits of a peaceful outer space.

Our proposal to develop an international legal agreement on the elimination of intermediate- and shorter-range missiles remains in force. We have already received quite a number of responses to this initiative, and the majority of them are positive. We call on States to continue the dialogue on the key elements of the potential agreement on intermediate- and shorter-range missiles.

Russia has consistently advocated both enhancing national and regional efforts to address the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and strengthening the coordinating role of the United Nations in this matter. We regret to note that in some regions no significant progress has been made in the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Despite existing financial,
political and other difficulties, the Programme of Action has not yet exhausted its potential, and States still have a long way to go to fully implement it.

First of all, additional efforts should be made to increase the effectiveness of national legislation governing control over internal arms trafficking and to prevent the diversion of arms from legal to illegal markets. Moreover, it is Governments that should be responsible for control over the trade in small arms and lights weapons on the territories of their countries. In our view, both States that export and States that import small arms and light weapons should be responsible for preventing the diversion of such weapons into illicit markets.

Russia appreciates the role of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, particularly in monitoring key patterns in arms transfers. We are confident that the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms will recommend that this important transparency mechanism be further developed, which will contribute to its universality.

We are interested in seeing the conventional arms control regime develop in a sustained manner and in the elaboration of new confidence- and security-building measures at both regional and subregional levels. With the agreement of all the States concerned, that would contribute to enhancing regional peace and security and would save funds, which could later be channelled to social ends. We support the measures and initiatives undertaken in this area. We believe that the European experience gained in this field under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe should be used in creative ways in other regions.

Russia’s initiative regarding a treaty on European security, as proposed by the Russian President Dmitry A. Medvedev in 2008, is also designed to contribute to strengthening regional security. The treaty would make it possible to establish a genuinely collective system in this area, based on the principle of the indivisibility of security, with no State strengthening its security at the expense of the security of others. We are ready to explain our position on this and other issues in greater detail during the upcoming substantive discussions.

The Russian delegation looks forward to constructive work. We will spare no effort to find mutually acceptable solutions.

Mr. Rao (India): Please accept our congratulations, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission. My delegation will extend its full support to you and the other members of the Bureau in the discharge of your responsibilities.

India associates itself with the statement made today by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Disarmament Commission commences this year’s substantive session at an important juncture, when there is renewed hope and expectation on addressing various challenges to international security. India has consistently attached high importance to the work of the Commission as the specialized deliberative organ of the United Nations disarmament machinery, as it is critical to the international community’s efforts to arrive at principles and recommendations of universal acceptance. While reaffirming the importance of multilateralism in this field, we call upon members of the Commission to redouble efforts this year so that we are able to give positive impetus to global, non-discriminatory disarmament.

India attaches the highest priority to nuclear disarmament. In 2006, we presented a working paper on nuclear disarmament in the First Committee of the General Assembly (see A/C.1/61/5). We would like to reiterate the salient points of that paper, which should guide us in building consensus on achieving the goal of universal, non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament. India has suggested initiating concrete steps towards achieving the goal of nuclear disarmament based on the following elements.

First, the unequivocal commitment of all nuclear-weapon States to the goal of complete elimination of nuclear weapons should be reaffirmed. Second, the salience of nuclear weapons in security doctrines should be reduced. Third, the global reach and menace of nuclear weapons, adoption of measures by nuclear-weapon States to reduce nuclear danger, including the risks of accidental nuclear war, de-alerting of nuclear weapons to prevent unintentional and accidental use of nuclear weapons should all be taken into account. Fourth, a global agreement among nuclear-weapon States on no first use of nuclear-weapons should be negotiated. Fifth, a universal and legally binding
agreement on non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States should be negotiated. Sixth, a convention on the complete prohibition of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons should be negotiated. And seventh, a nuclear weapons convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons and on their destruction, leading to the global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons, with a specified time frame, should be negotiated.

Nuclear disarmament has acquired greater urgency due to the new threat of the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists. The danger of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists has made the threat from nuclear weapons more complex and dangerous. While Member States strengthen national measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery and technologies related to their manufacture, it is also important to strengthen international cooperative efforts to address this critical challenge.

We welcome the renewed and active debate on nuclear disarmament taking place among scholars and statesmen. A number of countries have also launched initiatives to add new life to the global disarmament agenda. Even among those nuclear-weapon States that were reluctant supporters of nuclear reductions there appears to be a new willingness to ponder the relevance and future of nuclear weapons. These trends must be further strengthened with an effort to achieve the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, rather than taking ad hoc steps in non-proliferation, an approach whose limitations we have seen in the past. We believe that the Disarmament Commission must respond to these new trends so as to achieve consensus on the way forward. We also hope that the Conference on Disarmament will make tangible progress through efforts at achieving consensus on an appropriate mandate on nuclear disarmament.

The declaration of the 2010s as the fourth disarmament decade is an appropriate subject for discussion at the Disarmament Commission, as this declaration will give us the broad agenda which the United Nations disarmament machinery may pursue for the next 10 years. The declaration will make us focus on our task during the decade of the 2010s. The previous disarmament decades achieved concrete results, such as the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention. What we now need is a nuclear weapons convention that will close the loop on the weapons of mass destruction.

The issue of the prevention of an arms race in outer space is also very pertinent, and there are many proposals in this regard. A step-by-step approach for establishing a legal regime to address this issue must be taken during the decade. Other issues such as 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 and the allocation of resources made available as a result of the implementation of disarmament and arms limitations agreements to economic and social development, with a view to reducing the ever-widening gap between developed and developing countries, should also receive their rightful attention.

The United Nations and its Member States should carry out dissemination of information and educational programmes that promote peace and security and that are aimed at changing basic attitudes with respect to peace and security and disarmament among the new generation, so as to support the achievement of the purposes and principles of the United Nations. These programmes on disarmament education may encompass not only weapons of mass destruction but also small arms and light weapons, terrorism and other challenges. Civil society, the academic community and non-governmental organizations can play a significant role in raising awareness and providing an impetus for progress in these fields.

The debates on the two topics discussed in the last Disarmament Commission cycle were inconclusive. Therefore, we welcome a second round of deliberations on these two topics in this cycle. Both the issues are of critical importance in the disarmament agenda, and therefore discussions on “Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons” and “Confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons” will be useful.

Substantive progress was made in the discussions that took place on these two topics during the last cycle. We should preserve that progress and build upon it to achieve consensus. Our effort should be to adopt meaningful recommendations at the end of the three-year cycle which should contribute to enhancing international security while providing undiminished
and equal security to all States at the lowest level of armaments.

We believe that during the fresh cycle of the Disarmament Commission, we will be able to adopt a set of guidelines and recommendations that will serve the disarmament agenda well. India will participate constructively in the deliberations, and I assure you, Mr. Chairman, of my delegation’s full support in the conduct of the business of the Commission.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (spoke in Arabic): I congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of this body, and I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau. We appreciate the efforts you made during the informal consultations to reach consensus on the agenda for this session. We wish you success in leading our work to achieve concrete and positive results this year and we stress our full support in that regard.

I would also like to commend the efforts of the Secretary-General, and those of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, whom I thank for his statement. My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Indonesia, who spoke on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

I join previous speakers in calling on all States members of the Commission to comply with their Charter obligations in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation and to intensify international consultations in order to contribute to consolidating a global climate favourable to security and stability.

The Commission plays an indispensable role as a specialized deliberative body within the multilateral disarmament machinery of the United Nations and allows for in-depth deliberations with a view to making specific recommendations in the field of disarmament. Despite the difficulty of reaching consensus in this sensitive area, this body has produced good results in the past. We hope that the new substantive cycle that begins this year will also produce concrete results in the areas of nuclear weapons reductions, small arms and light weapons and confidence-building measures, as well as with respect to the fourth disarmament decade.

A top priority of the global disarmament agenda is the issue of nuclear disarmament. However, even with the approach of next year’s Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), progress remains slow in that regard. Some of the five nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty still refuse to pledge to implement its most important provisions, aimed at halting the development of and reductions in nuclear arsenals, while other nuclear-weapon States remain outside the Treaty. We call for the review process to be conducted in the light of the resolutions and decisions adopted at the previous sessions of the Preparatory Committee and to be adopted at the third session, to be held next month, and for all States to take practical and sincere steps in that connection.

We stress that the final disposal of nuclear weapons is a fundamental requirement that cannot be waived, simply because it is one of the pillars of the NPT. In the meantime, however, a binding international instrument to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons must be concluded as a matter of urgency.

The State of Qatar is keen to see a strengthened Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the implementation of its pillars: non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In that regard, we emphasize the inviolability of the inalienable right of States parties to have access to nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, and we stress that no obstacles should be placed in the way of non-nuclear-weapon States in their quest to develop nuclear capabilities for peaceful purposes. The State of Qatar supports early implementation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

It is imperative to implement the resolution, on the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, which was adopted in 1995 in exchange for the indefinite extension of the NPT and the accession of all Arab States to the Treaty. This was reaffirmed by a decision taken at the 2000 NPT Review Conference and re-emphasized by the Doha Declaration issued at the twenty-first Arab Summit. It is essential that States parties, in particular the three nuclear-weapon States that joined in adopting the resolution, break their silence regarding Israel’s nuclear policy, which continues to violate the NPT and is pushing the entire region into an arms race, thus jeopardizing regional and international security. Israel’s accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons would enhance the confidence needed to find solutions to many of the problems in the Middle East.
The General Assembly, in its resolution 61/67, directed the Commission to prepare elements of a draft declaration of the 2010s as the fourth disarmament decade. The fact that the three previous disarmament decades witnessed significant developments — including a global appeal for an end to the arms race, an arms reduction agenda, the holding of special sessions of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and confidence-building measures — leads us to attach importance to the declaration of the fourth decade, when we shall build on what has been achieved in the past in those areas. The elements of such a declaration must include the non-core issues in the field of disarmament, including small arms and light weapons, as well as the priority issue of nuclear disarmament, in accordance with the terms of reference agreed upon at previous special sessions devoted to disarmament.

The State of Qatar consistently strives to strengthen the disarmament machinery and its application. We are party to several major international conventions in the field of disarmament and have participated in all the relevant conferences and supported all the relevant resolutions. The State of Qatar submits substantive reports on disarmament and international security to the Office for Disarmament Affairs in order to assist the Secretariat in preparing its relevant annual reports.

At the national level in the State of Qatar, the task of monitoring the effectiveness of arms control is entrusted to a committee established in 2004 for that purpose, comprising representatives of relevant governmental bodies. The State of Qatar also hosts workshops and other events to enhance the training and participation of experts in the implementation of international conventions on the prohibition of weapons, especially when the implementation of such instruments is related to the strengthening of human rights and international humanitarian law and the implementation of relevant instruments and international protocols. The State of Qatar enacts the national legislation necessary for the fulfilment of its obligations in the area of disarmament and international security. National cadres and the media are trained to raise awareness about implementation and verification.

Other challenges in the field of disarmament are the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the failure to examine that problem in a professional manner, resulting from the fact that the responsibility of countries of origin, which export such weapons by the millions without adequate oversight and restrictions, is overlooked.

Another grave cause for concern is the proliferation of landmines and cluster munitions, including those planted by Israel in southern Lebanon, which continue to kill or permanently maim civilians. Thus, we signed the Declaration of the Wellington Conference on Cluster Munitions in Dublin last May and are currently considering when to join the Convention.

We share the international community’s concern about the seriousness of conventional weapons and their continuing development. In addressing that issue, however, we must be fair and not target specific countries in order to reveal their defence capabilities even as other countries continue to develop their own weapons capabilities, which would only fuel the arms race and waste resources, at the expense of development and environmental standards.

Mr. Kang Yong (China) (spoke in Chinese): On behalf of the Chinese delegation, I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at its present session. We believe that, with your rich diplomatic experience and skill, you are sure to lead the session to success. The Chinese delegation will work with you, the Chairs of the Working Groups and other delegations to that end. I also take this opportunity to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Piet de Klerk of the Netherlands, for his efforts during the previous session of the Commission.

Today’s world is in the midst of great changes and major adjustments. The world is growing increasingly polarized, and economic globalization is becoming more intense. But there is also movement towards a global quest for peace, development and cooperation. Overall, the international situation is stable, even as uncertainties are markedly increasing.

The global financial crisis shows that countries and peoples have never before been more interconnected or more interdependent. And in today’s world, with its increasing globalization, the interdependence of countries is on the rise in the security sphere as well.
No country can ensure development on its own or see to its own affairs in isolation. The only way for countries to address the many challenges before them and strengthen their mutual security is to maintain mutual trust, take account of mutual benefit, equality and cooperation, adopt a new security outlook that embodies those features and insist on multilateralism and strengthened international cooperation. This must be done through international arms control and non-proliferation efforts aimed at the attainment of peace and development, and it represents the common aspiration of the international community.

Over the years there has been a sad lack of progress on international arms control, and diplomatic efforts to resolve regional nuclear issues have encountered obstacles. The international non-proliferation regime is facing significant challenges. It is, however, heartening that the manner in which the international community has addressed the global financial crisis demonstrates a high degree of solidarity. Unilateralism has been cast aside. The international community is showing increased enthusiasm for the promotion of multilateral arms control and non-proliferation efforts. Such efforts, which had for some years been stagnant, are showing signs of revival. This presents a unique opportunity to promote multilateral arms control and non-proliferation efforts.

China attaches great importance to the work of the Disarmament Commission. In our view, the Commission, as the sole multilateral deliberative body in the field of disarmament, has a historic mission to promote arms control and disarmament. But international arms control and disarmament efforts have long been at a low ebb, and for six years the Disarmament Commission has been unable to achieve any substantive results.

This session of the Disarmament Commission marks the start of a new cycle of deliberations and a fresh beginning in the Commission’s work. We hope that, with efforts by all parties, the new cycle will result in progress and thus make a contribution to international arms control and disarmament efforts.

In the present circumstances, it is extremely important and most timely that the 2010s should be declared as the fourth disarmament decade. At its present session the Disarmament Commission has shouldered the task of drafting a declaration to that effect. This is a glorious and significant mission. I believe that the declaration will chart the way forward for future multilateral arms control and non-proliferation efforts. We shall work constructively with others to ensure progress in the drafting of the declaration. China believes that the declaration should draw upon past experience and briefly summarize the outcome of the previous three disarmament decades. It should contain a positive appraisal of results to date and should take stock of current problems that are the legacy of the past and that could be relevant for our present and future work.

At the same time, the declaration should analyse new challenges to international security and ensure that we are clear about the new arms control and non-proliferation tasks before us. The declaration should stress the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter and the principles governing arms control and disarmament, as set out in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I) (resolution S-10/2). In consonance with the new characteristics of today’s international security situation, the declaration should highlight multilateralism and the role of the United Nations. It should emphasize strategic balance, stability and the principle of undiminished security for all countries, and it should set out the goals and priorities of international arms control and disarmament for the coming decade. The declaration should also include provisions in that regard that will enable it to enjoy universal support.

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation were priorities during the previous two three-year cycles, but the parties reached no consensus. The Chinese delegation wishes to emphasize a number of points in that regard.

First, eliminating nuclear weapons and achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world are the common aspiration of the international community. China has consistently advocated the complete prohibition and total destruction of nuclear weapons to truly rid the world of nuclear weapons and the madness of nuclear war. China welcomes the resumption of strategic arms reduction talks between Russia and the United States. We hope that those two largest nuclear countries will act in accordance with the principle of verifiable and irreversible reductions in their nuclear arsenals and
will earnestly shoulder their special priority responsibilities with respect to nuclear disarmament.

Secondly, complete nuclear disarmament cannot be carried out at a single stroke. We should rather proceed on the basis of maintaining global strategic balance and stability and ensuring undiminished security for all countries, taking incremental, systematic and practical steps towards that goal. In the present circumstances, it is essential to ensure that nuclear-weapon States undertake not to use nuclear weapons and undertake unconditionally not to use or threaten to use such weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States, with a view to the conclusion of the relevant legal instruments.

China supports substantive work under Disarmament Commission auspices and on a balanced and comprehensive basis in areas such as nuclear disarmament, negative nuclear assurances, the prohibition of the production of fissile materials that could be used for the manufacture of nuclear weapons and the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Thirdly, as a nuclear country, China has never shirked its international obligations and responsibilities under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). With respect to the scale and direction of its development of nuclear weapons, China has maintained an attitude of restraint. China has not engaged and will not engage in any nuclear arms race with any country. China is unconditionally committed to not being the first to use nuclear weapons and to not using or threatening to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States and regions.

The Chinese Government is implementing the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and has been consistently committed to the moratorium on nuclear tests. It supports the ratification process for the Treaty and is ready to work with the international community to ensure that it enters into force as soon as possible.

Nuclear non-proliferation is an urgent task facing the international community. At stake are regional and global peace and stability, as well as the international non-proliferation regime. China suggests that we remain committed to the following principles in addressing the issue of proliferation.

First, we must address the symptoms and the root causes of the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The international community should base its actions on the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter in an effort to promote an international environment conducive to peace and stability and to eradicate the root causes of the maintenance and testing of nuclear weapons. Secondly, we should seek to ensure the indiscriminate and fair nature of international non-proliferation efforts. We must assess the relationship between proliferation and the peaceful uses of science and technology. Thirdly, we should insist on dialogue and negotiation. Sanctions and pressure will not help to solve our problems. Instead, we should cooperate, rather than confront, as we seek to resolve our differences, and we should refrain from using or threatening to use force. Fourthly, we should promote international discussions to foster and strengthen the international non-proliferation regime.

It is most timely at this juncture to promote the review of the NPT. China has strictly honoured its non-proliferation obligations, and attaches great importance to and is deeply involved in relevant international efforts as a consistent element of its policies. China has been engaged in the denuclearization process on the Korean peninsula and has actively participated in the diplomatic efforts to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue. The nuclear situations concerning the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and Iran are currently stalemated and therefore require us all to be patient and flexible so that we can capitalize on available opportunities to overcome our difficulties and ensure that dialogue proceeds in the desired direction. China will continue to play a constructive role to that end.

China supports confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. The Disarmament Commission’s deliberations of recent years have demonstrated, on the one hand, the consensus that exists among parties and, on the other, the complexity and sensitivity of the issue. Conventional weapons are indeed connected to the major security concerns of all countries. On the basis of voluntary participation and in the security interests of all countries, we must take measures to strengthen confidence-building. To that end, we must take into account the extent to which such measures will be positively received by the parties concerned and thereby minimize the potential for emerging differences. We should also take account of the circumstances of each country when adopting practical measures to strengthen confidence-building.
China will pursue its efforts to foster peace and to implement its national defence policies. We have been actively engaged for years in regional disarmament and confidence-building efforts at the bilateral level and in the context of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and other multilateral frameworks. Alongside the countries concerned, China has striven to explore ways and means to build confidence and security.

Two years ago, China began participating in the system to ensure transparency in military expenditures, and has now resumed its participation in the United Nations Register of Conventional Weapons. Through these actions, China has shown the world that it represents a third force for regional and international peace and stability and that it poses no threat to any country in the world.

Promoting arms control and disarmament is a prerequisite to the establishment of lasting peace, common prosperity and harmony. On the basis of the aforementioned principles, China is prepared to work with all parties to ensure that the Disarmament Commission will achieve good progress on all three agenda items at this session.

I have asked for the floor to inform the Commission that my delegation intends to exercise its right of reply to the statement made by the representative of Japan. We all know how hysterically and frantically Japan attempted to secure a Security Council resolution or presidential statement with regard to our successful launch of a satellite last week. Nevertheless, Japan failed to secure the adoption of a resolution and had to settle for a statement. My Government strongly rejected that statement through the statement issued by the Foreign Ministry on 14 April.

That is a brief summary of the information my delegation intends to share with the Commission. I shall certainly clarify our detailed position at the conclusion of this afternoon’s meeting.

The Chairman: I call on the representative of Japan, who wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Okuda (Japan): I wish to respond briefly to the statement just made by the representative of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. I draw the attention of the members of the Commission to the fact that there was no so-called statement issued by the Security Council. What we heard was a presidential statement of the Security Council, which was, of course, unanimously adopted on the basis of the agreement of each and every member of the Council.

I may have to talk a little bit longer at some point, but for the time being I will stop at that.

The meeting rose at noon.