Chairman: Mr. Maiolini ............................................ (Italy)

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

Opening of the session


Allow me on behalf of all members of the Commission to extend my sincere gratitude to Mr. Jian Chen, Under-Secretary-General for the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management, which is responsible for servicing the United Nations Disarmament Commission, and to Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, which will provide substantive support to the session of the Commission. The presence of these widely respected diplomats once again underlines the importance of the Disarmament Commission in general and the positive hopes and expectations of the Member States from this session in particular.

Adoption of the agenda

The Chairman: I direct the Commission’s attention to document A/CN.10/L.53, entitled “Provisional agenda”. Members of the Commission may recall that, at our organizational session on 17 October 2002, the Commission formally adopted the provisional agenda. Therefore, at this meeting, the Commission will take no action, but simply take note of document A/CN.10/L.53, together with the provisional programme of work contained in A/CN.10/2003/CRP.1, which was also distributed and discussed at the organizational session.

Election of officers

The Chairman: Allow me now to proceed with the election of the remaining members of the Bureau. As members will recall, the Commission is still to elect one Vice-Chairperson from the Group of African States, one Vice-Chairperson from the Group of Western European and Other States and two Vice-Chairpersons from the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

I have been informed that the Group of African States, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Group of Western European and Other States have successfully completed their respective nominating processes and that we now have three candidates for the remaining four posts. The Group of African States has nominated Mr. Saad Maandi of Algeria; the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States has nominated Ms. Marly Cedeño Reyes of Venezuela; and the Group of Western European and Other States has nominated Mr. John Gosal of Canada as Vice-Chairpersons of the Commission.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect Mr. Saad Maandi of Algeria, Ms. Marly Cedeño Reyes of Venezuela and Mr. John Gosal of Canada as Vice-Chairpersons of the Commission.

It was so decided.
Allow me on behalf of the Commission and my fellow members of the Bureau to warmly congratulate the newly elected members of the Bureau and to wish them success in discharging their duties. I am sure that they will make an important contribution to the smooth work of the Commission this year. On a more personal note, I would like to mention that I shall count on their support and counsel.

I was also informed that intensive consultations are under way within the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States to nominate the last remaining candidates to the Bureau. Accordingly, I propose to suspend the discussion on this item and to get back to it at a later stage.

While we are on the issue of elected officials of the Commission, let me call attention to the following important developments requiring our immediate reaction.

I was recently informed by the Chairman of Working Group I, on ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament, Mr. Yaw Odei Osei of Ghana, that due to unforeseen circumstances he will not be able to attend this session of the Commission. The necessary consultations among the regional groups resulted in agreement that the Group of African States would nominate the candidate for the vacant post of Chairman. I am in receipt of a communication from the Chairman of that Group stating that Mr. Alaa Issa of Egypt has been unanimously designated by the regional group to take over Working Group I.

If I hear no objection I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect Mr. Issa as Chairman of Working Group I.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: We all know Mr. Issa for his profound experience in disarmament, and in multilateral diplomacy in general. I am sure I speak on behalf of the whole Commission when I express our satisfaction on his joining the extended Bureau at such a vital stage of the Group’s deliberations. Mindful of the constraints, I want to offer my support and assistance to him in discharging this difficult and important task.

I was also informed by the Chairperson of Working Group II on conventional weapons, Ms. Gabriela Martinic of Argentina, that due to circumstances, she cannot continue in her capacity as Chairperson of the Working Group. Needless to say, this is a great loss to the Working Group, to the Commission in general and to me personally as Chairman, due to her active role and delicate consensus-building skills, as well as her sound political judgement. For the last two years the Group has had the benefit of her working paper, which constitutes a good basis for future deliberations this year.

On behalf of the Commission and myself, let me thank Ms. Gabriela Martinic for her tireless efforts and her valuable contribution to the deliberations of Working Group II and the Commission. It is my understanding that she will be available to the Bureau — and, especially, to the new Chairperson to be elected and to the Working Group — with her counsel. We congratulate her and wish her all the best.

The Commission is faced with the task of electing a new Chairperson of Working Group II. Consultations among and within the regional groups have resulted in consensus as to the candidate for this post. I am in receipt of an official communication from the Chairman of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States stating that the Group wishes to nominate Mr. Santiago Irazabal Mourão of Brazil as the Chairman of Working Group II.

We all know Mr. Santiago Mourão as an experienced disarmament diplomat who has devoted many years of his diplomatic career to multilateral diplomacy. I am happy to see him assuming the vital post of the chairmanship and wish him success in his endeavours. He can always count on my assistance, as well as on the support of all other Bureau members.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to unanimously elect Mr. Santiago Mourão as Chairman of Working Group II.

It was so decided.

Statement by the Chairman

The Chairman: I begin today by thanking members for extending to me the honour of serving as Chairman of this new session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. In the weeks ahead, I will ensure that all delegations have a fair opportunity to express their views, and I will work to achieve a new consensus that builds on the accomplishments of our predecessors.
The Commission was created to consider some of the most complex security problems imaginable. The norms it deliberates today must have the capacity to adjust to new demands that will arise from technological, political and social forces in the world of tomorrow. Such challenges require us to proceed in a prudent and businesslike manner. We should avoid the temptation to be overly ambitious, as the complexities of the present and the uncertainties of the future require a cautious and measured approach. I ask only that we observe one golden rule: that we seek to ensure that our words and initiatives serve the collective interests of future generations. That is how disarmament norms have evolved in the past, and this is how we should proceed.

The Disarmament Commission has half a century of history behind it. It is now entering its fifty-first year. This anniversary symbolizes the tenacity of this institution and the principles it represents. Soon, a third generation of representatives will join our ranks and our task. That continuity of effort will be needed as we continue our collective efforts on behalf of global disarmament norms.

Two years ago, the Secretary-General’s Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters warned of a crisis in multilateral disarmament diplomacy. Today, as the Commission assembles amid a troubled international environment and persisting concern over the future of multilateral disarmament efforts — if not of multilateralism itself — the Advisory Board’s warning should serve as a call to action in defence of what unites our nations. Let us not forget that the Commission has already in the past met in difficult times and has proved its ability to adapt to changing circumstances without sacrificing its fundamental purposes and principles.

The Commission was forged in 1952, at the dawn of the cold war and in the midst of a conflict. It also appeared in the same year as the hydrogen bomb. The mood of the General Assembly in January 1952 was accurately reflected in resolution 502 (VI), which established the Commission. Its first preambular paragraph states that the General Assembly was

“Moved by anxiety at the general lack of confidence plaguing the world and leading to the burden of increasing armaments and the fear of war”.

The resolution called for the elimination of “all major weapons adaptable to mass destruction”, for the limitation and balanced reduction of all armed forces and all other armaments, and for efforts to ensure effective international control of atomic energy for peaceful uses. It also stated, in operative paragraph 3 (a), that:

“In a system of guaranteed disarmament there must be progressive disclosure and verification on a continuing basis of all armed forces … and all armaments including atomic”.

All of these themes remain quite relevant to our work today.

In the decades following the adoption of resolution 502 (VI), the Commission faced numerous obstacles relating to the cold war, a series of armed conflicts and mounting military expenditures. Yet — I repeat, yet — it eventually succeeded in reaching a consensus on several principles and guidelines for future disarmament and arms control efforts.

In recent years, this progress has included guidelines for objective information on military matters; regional approaches to disarmament; guidelines for international arms transfers; and two sets of guidelines in 1999 dealing with nuclear-weapon-free zones and conventional arms control. This tradition of persistence in the face of adversity should inspire our own efforts as we explore new ways to move the multilateral disarmament agenda forward in two key areas.

The first item on our substantive agenda is “Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament”, an item that Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld once called a “hardy perennial” on the United Nations agenda for international peace and security. The persistence of global efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons relates directly to their unique and indiscriminate effects — effects that led the world community to devise a wide range of non-proliferation and disarmament measures. Although few States have sought nuclear weapons since the Commission first met in 1952, such weapons have nevertheless spread. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of such weapons reportedly remain in existing stockpiles; the exact number, however, remains unknown, which brings to mind the Commission’s long-standing goal of promoting greater “disclosure and verification”.

A/CN.10/PV.251
Based on proposals discussed at the last session and in the intersessional period, the former Chairman of Working Group I, Mr. Yaw Odei Osei, has prepared a revised working paper that offers an extensive survey of relevant achievements, developments and mechanisms in the field of nuclear disarmament. I welcome the new Chairman of this Group, Mr. Alaa Isaa, and I wish him well in the deliberations that lie ahead.

The second item on the agenda concerns “practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms”. Conventional arms have earned their place on our agenda due to their own devastating effects. Produced in large numbers worldwide, such weapons are difficult to control. They present their own problems of disclosure and verification. And while they serve some legitimate self-defence goals, they also continue to be manufactured by many States in numbers far greater than are needed for domestic consumption — a phenomenon that has contributed to a thriving arms trade, including worrisome illicit transfers.

Working Group II — ably chaired until quite recently by Ms. Gabriela Martinic — will focus on a non-paper addressing a wide range of confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. I welcome the new Chairman of this Working Group, Mr. Santiago Mourão, and wish him well in the deliberations that lie ahead.

Together, the texts of the papers from both of these working groups provide a solid foundation for further discussions aimed at achieving a consensus on constructive measures that will strengthen international peace and security, while contributing to the prevention of war.

With international peace and security as our common goal, multilateralism must be our common path. What, after all, is multilateralism? It is nothing less than the process of democracy among nations — a form of governance based on universal participation in achieving universal aims. While the benefits of such cooperation are limitless, they do require sustained human effort, and above all a spirit of compromise and flexibility. It is on this foundation of mutual benefit and cooperation — rather than the endless accumulation and perfection of weaponry — that we can best promote the interests of all.

The Disarmament Commission has an enormously important role to play in contributing to what Italians call a *risorgimento* of multilateralism in international peace and security — a renewal or rebirth of the forces that bind nations together in a common destiny. We must seek nothing less than to discover new bonds to unite our nations in the noblest of pursuits.

I wish the Committee well in its deliberations.

I should now like to draw the Committee’s attention to the general programme of work for the current session. As the Committee may recall, document A/CN.10/2003/CRP.1 was distributed during the organizational session on 17 April 2002. At this stage, it should be noted that the programme of work is an indicative timetable for the work of the Commission and, as such, is subject to further adjustment as necessary.

With regard to the timetable, which was also prepared and distributed by the Secretariat today, it should be noted that it will remain unchanged. As far as the second week is concerned, a relevant informal paper will be decided upon by the Bureau in consultation with the Chairmen of the Working Groups. Subsequently, the Secretariat will issue the paper in a timely manner.

As regards the allocation of time for each substantive agenda item, the principle of equal footing and flexibility for practical purposes will be observed. Since both items under consideration are in their third, final year, we might expect that both Working Groups would require an equal number of meetings. As I have noted before, the weekly timetable and programme of work will take into account these considerations, as well as the specific needs of each subsidiary body, through consultations with the Chairmen of the Working Groups.

As members may have noticed in document A/CN.10/2003/CRP.1, containing the general programme of work, four meetings have been allocated to the general exchange of views. I should like to invite delegations wishing to make statements to inscribe their names on the list of speakers with the Secretariat as soon as possible. The deadline for such inscription is 6 p.m. today. May I remind delegations that, as a rule, 35 copies of statements should be provided to the Secretariat.
As there are no comments, and as I hear no objection, I shall take it that it is the wish of the Commission to proceed in this manner.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: Before we proceed with the general debate, I should like to comment briefly on the participation of non-governmental organizations in the work of the Commission. As has been the case in previous years, they are welcome to attend plenary meetings and meetings of the Committee of the Whole of the Disarmament Commission as observers.

General exchange of views

The Chairman: I should now like to give the floor to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala.

Mr. Dhanapala (Under Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs): I should like to begin by congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, and the rest of the Bureau and by pledging the full cooperation and substantive support of the Department for Disarmament Affairs with regard to your efforts throughout the deliberations ahead. I should also like to think Mr. Yaw Odei Osei of Ghana and Ms. Gabriela Martinic of Argentina for their good work in chairing the Working Groups during the past few years, and I appreciate the readiness of Mr. Alaa Isaa of Egypt and of Mr. Santiago Irazabal Mourão of Brazil to assume their responsibilities at short notice.

Over the past five years, in which I have served as Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, I have been impressed with the Commission’s commitment to its basic purposes and principles as well as its demonstrated capacity to adapt its practices to meet new demands arising from the ever-changing international environment. It has, for example, agreed to limit the number of substantive items on its agenda in order to permit more in-depth deliberations. The Commission has also had some very productive sessions, in particular that of 1999, when it was able to reach a consensus on guidelines for establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones and for conventional arms control.

The Commission performs an indispensable role in the evolution of global disarmament norms. Its focused substantive agenda allows it to concentrate its deliberations far more than is possible in the First Committee, which has additional responsibilities that include the consideration of more than 50 disarmament-related draft resolutions each year. If the United Nations is — as described in the Millennium Declaration — the indispensable common house of the entire human family, the Disarmament Commission is the wing of that house where new disarmament norms are discussed and elaborated.

Leaving the task of crafting resolutions and negotiating treaties to other parts of the United Nations disarmament machinery, the Commission makes its greatest contributions in the realm of ideas. It serves as a seedbed from which global disarmament norms may ultimately emerge. Being strictly a deliberative forum, it often encounters disagreements among its members over policies and priorities. Yet, through this deliberative process, areas of common ground do indeed emerge, as they did on several occasions in the Commission’s work throughout the decade of the 1990s.

It is undeniable, however, that the Commission — in common with other parts of the multilateral disarmament machinery — has faced some difficult times in recent years. Its inability to schedule a substantive session in 2002 — the year of its fiftieth anniversary — was especially regrettable, and I hope there will never again be occasion to cancel a session of the Disarmament Commission.

Today, disagreements about the role of force in international relations, about the contributions of multilateralism to international peace and security and, indeed, about the relevance and role of the United Nations in serving the gamut of global norms are presenting new challenges for the consensus-building process in the Commission. Those hardships coincide with the recent trend of rising global military expenditures, which this year will likely exceed $1 trillion — an unconscionable statistic reminiscent of spending levels during the cold war.

Yet when times are difficult, the deliberative function of the Commission is all the more important to sustain. That is particularly true with respect to the two issues now on its agenda, relating to nuclear disarmament and to confidence-building in the field of conventional arms. This year — which marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the grand consensus on multilateral disarmament at the General Assembly’s first special session on disarmament — the
Commission has a unique opportunity to demonstrate its capacity to rise to new challenges, to overcome obstacles and to reach common understandings on matters of great importance to all Member States. The first item on its agenda concerns ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament. The difficulty of that challenge is best symbolized by the grim fact that this issue has now been on the agenda of the United Nations for 57 years, starting with the General Assembly’s first resolution, in 1946.

There has, of course, been some recent progress in related areas. Perhaps the most significant developments include the bilateral Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions, which will, when it enters into force, reduce substantially the numbers of strategic nuclear weapons deployed by the United States and by the Russian Federation.

Another development is the recent commitment of some $20 billion, through the Group of Eight (G-8) Global Partnership, to efforts against the spread of weapons and materials of mass destruction. Several additional achievements are exhaustively documented in the working paper of the Chairman of Working Group I.

Yet the actual record in achieving the verified dismantlement and destruction of nuclear weapons inspires little confidence, despite the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States at the 2000 NPT Review Conference to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament. Tens of thousands of these weapons reportedly remain, though exactly how many is still unconfirmed, given the lack of transparency with regard to these various weapons programmes. The possible development of new weapons and new targeting options to serve aggressive counter-proliferation purposes further undermines this solemn disarmament undertaking, while creating new incentives for clandestine programmes.

This creeping retreat from nuclear disarmament has also been accompanied by recent challenges to global non-proliferation norms, including but not limited to the decision by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to leave the NPT, and the South Asian nuclear tests in 1998. It is also troubling that proliferation has in some cases been accompanied by the spread of various deterrent doctrines to govern the use of such weapons.

Virtually all members agree that verification and compliance are critical to the success of both disarmament and non-proliferation commitments, as is the non-discriminatory enforcement of the relevant norms. Such functions are vital to the evolution of a genuine rule of law to serve international peace and security. Yet how is the world to reach agreement on the ways and means to achieve global nuclear disarmament, including its modalities for verification and enforcement, if not through a careful deliberative process?

The review process of the NPT is surely one important arena for assessing progress in implementing the global nuclear disarmament norm. But the Disarmament Commission has the advantage of being a fully universal deliberative body, which enables it to complement the goals of the NPT review process. Working in tandem, these two arenas offer great potential to move the global nuclear disarmament agenda forward at a time when such progress is long overdue.

With respect to conventional arms, every member of the Commission has heard the dictum that arms do not cause wars, and that people cause wars. To the extent that arms are inanimate objects that have no will of their own, there is undeniably some logic in such an assertion. Yet how those weapons are developed, tested, traded and finally used to cause death and suffering can indeed have some profound effects on international peace and security. The specific characteristics of weapons, such as their lethality, mobility, weight, range, stealthiness and other such properties, reveal a lot about the capabilities of the State possessing such arms and, to some extent, about its intentions as well. Similarly, the sheer volume of weapons, if demonstrably in excess of legitimate security needs, can also serve to breed mistrust in international relations. At worst, it can lead to conditions triggering pre-emptive wars. In such an environment, even routine military exercises might be confused with preparations for war.

The problem is further complicated in the conventional arms field because it is legitimate for States to possess such weaponry for their self-defence purposes and because commercial and political motivations frequently underlie their continued production, perfection and export. In the Persian Gulf, even the current war in Iraq did not deter the convening last month of a major defence trade exhibition in the
region. One official commented after the event, “War might delay a few deals for weeks and maybe months but will not really affect the sales”. Indeed, the war might serve as a macabre advertisement for new types of weapons.

So, the great challenge before the Commission is to find a way to reduce threats to international peace and security posed by such weapons while protecting the inherent right of all Member States to the means for their self-defence. Since conventional weapons will be with us all for a while to come, it is eminently sensible for States to consult amongst themselves to discover practical confidence-building measures that will at least ensure that the competition to make, test, use and sell such arms takes place within some generally agreed constraints. At best, agreement on confidence-building measures may alleviate pressures to acquire such weaponry, to augment existing stocks or to develop new weapons, while reducing the risks of war.

Again, how is the world to arrive at such undertakings if not through a patient deliberative process? What better place to consider such initiatives on a global scale than the United Nations, whose first purpose in the Charter is to maintain international peace and security? And what place in the United Nations system is more appropriate and relevant for sustained deliberation of the principles and mechanisms to approach this specific issue than the Disarmament Commission?

By any definition, these are trying times for advocates of security through disarmament. We meet today in a tragic wartime environment caused by the failure of the Security Council to agree on a collective course of action to achieve the disarmament of Iraq. We face persisting threats from weapons of mass destruction: actual weapons in the custody of States and potential weapons in the hands of non-State actors. We see the continued production, storage and transportation of materials that can be used in the manufacture of such weapons. We see a thriving arms trade and continued reports of civilian casualties from the use of conventional arms around the world. And we see the costs that such developments are imposing on the social and economic development of virtually all States.

Yet that must not be all we see. The Commission must never underestimate the actual or potential support that exists among the people for concrete initiatives to liberate them from the prospect of war or the threat of war. Motivated by public expectations, stimulated by enlightened leadership and recognizing the clear material and social benefits of achieving a world without nuclear weapons and with responsible controls over conventional arms, the Commission, though in its fifty-first year, may have just begun to demonstrate its full potential.

In this, my last statement to the Commission as Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, I wish members all success in their deliberations. I am confident that this institution will indeed fulfil its potential.

The Chairman: I wish the Under-Secretary-General well and express to him all my respect and consideration for the way in which he has performed the tasks assigned to him by the Secretary-General and by the United Nations.

Mr. Goussous (Jordan) (spoke in Arabic): I am very pleased to congratulate you most sincerely, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at its 2003 substantive session. I should like to express my full confidence in your enlightened guidance of the Commission’s work and in your effectiveness.

I also wish to congratulate the members of the Bureau on their election to their respective posts. I would be remiss if I did not also congratulate the chairpersons of the two working groups as well.

Jordan attaches the utmost importance to the work of the Disarmament Commission, because it is one of the mechanisms that makes disarmament possible and that may allow non-proliferation to become a reality. The Commission’s work is of particular importance this year, as this is the third session that is responsible for negotiating the guidelines for adopting effective mechanisms for nuclear disarmament and for confidence-building with respect to conventional weapons.

I should like first to address the question of nuclear weapons, which is of the highest priority, as reflected in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. This priority will remain the basis of our work until the ultimate objective — nuclear disarmament — is achieved. My delegation hopes that this item will be addressed in a spirit of good faith that
will allow us to achieve genuine nuclear disarmament and to reaffirm the special nature of the situation in the Middle East.

Nuclear weapons and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction pose many threats to humankind. International efforts must therefore be enhanced to allow the adoption of mechanisms to counter and definitively eliminate this danger through an international framework designed to achieve that end. That is why we believe it necessary to reactivate the Conference on Disarmament, which is an effective negotiating mechanism for achieving genuine disarmament. This Commission will also have to adopt guidelines on eliminating nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction once and for all. Nor must we forget the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In that context, the five nuclear countries must assume their obligations under article VI of that Treaty.

With respect to the Middle East, all the States of the region have pledged to achieve nuclear disarmament through their adherence to the non-proliferation Treaty in order to reaffirm their desire to free the Middle East of nuclear weapons and to work at the international level towards the goal of ridding the world of such weapons.

Israel, however, has refused to accede to the Treaty. It has chosen to preserve the nuclear option and refused to submit its nuclear installations to the safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty, in its Final Document, which was adopted by consensus, reaffirmed

“the importance of Israel’s adherence to the non-proliferation Treaty and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards, in realizing the goal of universal adherence to the Treaty in the Middle East”.

(NPT/CONF.2000/28, Part I, p. 17)

The General Assembly reaffirmed this objective at its fifty-fifth session by adopting a resolution on the risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East.

Jordan attaches great importance to nuclear non-proliferation in the Middle East and in the world at large. In this regard, we welcome the efforts and initiatives undertaken with respect to nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, which were crystallized in the General Assembly’s consensus adoption in 1980 of a resolution on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Resolutions on the risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East have also been adopted year after year by an overwhelming majority.

The development and implementation of confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons is a subject of great interest to Jordan. We believe that there are many topics in this context that need further consideration before guidelines can be established. Among topics warranting specific attention, mention must be made of the question of whether the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms has actually been as successful as desired. In this regard, Jordan regrets that the Group of Governmental Experts, at its 2000 session, did not succeed in its tasks of expanding the Register to include weapons held by military forces that are produced locally and of incorporating weapons of mass destruction, nuclear weapons in particular; into the Register. This is counter to resolution 46/36 L, by which the Register was established.

Thus, the Register is not at present an effective confidence-building or early warning mechanism. It should be broadened in scope to include all types of weapons, on a non-selective basis. This is all the more true because experience in past years has shown that a Register comprising seven types of conventional weapons cannot gain global adherence, and many States believe that such a limited Register is sufficient for ensuring their security needs. That is why the Register’s future success requires the international community’s genuine willingness to be more transparent in this work in order to established real confidence in the Register.

Mr. Maandi (Algeria) (spoke in French): The work of the 2003 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission is being held as a deadly war is taking place in Iraq. Since the beginning of the crisis, Algeria has called for a peaceful settlement to the issue of the disarmament of Iraq. Just a few days ago, it warned of the perils and dangers that a conflict in Iraq would bring to that country, to the already suffering countries of the region and to world peace.

My country deeply regrets that the inspection tasks of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the
International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) were suddenly interrupted when they were beginning to produce results, despite the appeal of the international community and the head inspectors themselves for a peaceful settlement to the crisis. My country also regrets the loss of human life and the terrible destruction caused by the conflict.

Having said that, it is a great pleasure to congratulate you, Sir, on your well deserved election to the chairmanship of this important Commission. My congratulations go to the other members of the Bureau as well. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my best wishes for your success in your difficult task and to assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation.

I would be remiss if I failed to pay tribute to your predecessor for the worthy efforts he made at the head of the Commission. I express my full appreciation for the way he conducted the work of the preceding session. My delegation would also like to pay a well deserved tribute to Mr. Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his worthy efforts in the area of disarmament.

More than half a century has passed since the international community became aware of the destructive effects of the accumulation of weapons and appealed openly and strongly for disarmament. The first detonation of a nuclear weapon and the nuclear arms race that followed made disarmament an objective and an essential pillar of the creation of a new system of international security.

That appeal remains just as timely today. What is more, since the two world wars and the cold war period, never have nuclear, chemical, biological or conventional weapons been so highly valued, held to be an absolute guarantee of security and, most often, used as an instrument of intimidation and domination.

Neither the détente that marked international relations at the end of the cold war nor the conclusion of certain conventions and treaties in the area of disarmament nor even the bright spell following the positive results of the Sixth Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NTP), have managed to dissipate suspicion or to mitigate the security concerns of certain countries, which would have motivated them to eliminate their weapons of mass destruction and to limit the production and stockpiling of conventional weapons to levels compatible with the needs of security and legitimate self-defence.

In fact, prospects for disarmament are darkening dangerously. The perfection and qualitative development of new types of weapons — combined with the deliberately selective implementation of those conventions and treaties and the fundamental role given to nuclear arms in security policies — have contributed to disparate levels of military capacity, to the development of a climate of distrust and scepticism and to an acceleration of the arms race.

That trend must change if we wish to make progress towards disarmament. The goal of disarmament, which is increasingly relevant, must be rehabilitated and given concrete expression.

The principal threats and challenges the international community must now face call for a security that is global in scope, universal in its foundation and non-discriminatory in its effects and benefits: a security that liberates, most naturally, energies and resources long consumed by the arms race for the promotion and improvement of the living conditions of human beings. It is, in the end, a security that must free itself of atavistic and anachronistic reflexes and promote the virtues of trust and cooperation in the global village now being constructed. For, today security is guaranteed not by weapons but, rather, by economic and social development, which will provide the foundation for peace and harmony among nations.

Nuclear disarmament is at once a priority and a pressing issue. Nothing justifies certain countries’ permanent possession of nuclear weapons while almost all other countries remain committed to not acquiring them. The principle of undiminished security, so dear to us all, can have meaning only if we undertake to eliminate nuclear weapons and to free humankind from the threat of annihilation. Security is one and indivisible. It must benefit all human beings. To act in a way that allows the world to be divided forever between nuclear and non-nuclear States is both unacceptable and inconceivable.

The argument that the maintenance of nuclear arsenals is dictated by the vital interests of national security is not convincing. It in no way serves the cause of nuclear disarmament. On the contrary, it calls into question the credibility of nuclear disarmament commitments already made and even undermines the
principle of undiminished security. It fuels discrimination and constitutes a threat to the security of others.

It is clear that, as long as nuclear weapons exist, the threat of their use will also exist — something that would have unimaginable consequences. To possess such weapons with a view to intimidation or domination is morally repugnant and politically untenable.

Having said that, the item entitled “Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament”, which we will be discussing in the first Group, provides a timely opportunity to reflect on and propose recommendations on nuclear disarmament, which is a key pillar of international disarmament and security.

The document submitted to that end by the Chairman of that Group, which contains all of the proposals that have been put forward to date, is a good working basis. We must consolidate it in order to yield an approach that would make a useful contribution to achieving the lofty goal of nuclear disarmament.

From our perspective, nuclear disarmament, which will rid humankind of the threat of nuclear war and of annihilation, must involve the total elimination of nuclear stockpiles. Unilateral and bilateral approaches, while they are indeed necessary and useful in the area of reducing nuclear-weapon stockpiles, cannot, because of their partial and provisional nature, bring about nuclear disarmament.

The path to nuclear disarmament has already been charted. To be sure, while the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly on disarmament remains a baseline and a normative basis for nuclear disarmament, article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the legal basis for reaching this goal; it is of binding effect.

In this spirit, the specific measures taken at the sixth NPT Review Conference, held in 2000, for the implementation of article VI of the NPT represent a programme of action — ways and means of achieving disarmament which have charted a course towards disarmament and strengthened our common aspiration: the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We must solemnly reaffirm the validity of these measures and the urgent need to put them into practice.

Nuclear disarmament and its irreversible progression will become a reality only when the historic commitment undertaken unequivocally here in New York by the nuclear-weapon States, at the Sixth Review Conference, to totally eliminate their nuclear stockpiles is translated into reality, and when the Disarmament Commission — the sole body for multilateral negotiations in the area of disarmament — undertakes, in good faith and immediately, negotiations on the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

We must undertake, in order to preserve the credibility of the NPT, to implement its measures and to ensure that article VI is implemented in terms of reaching multilateral agreements and arrangements that would serve to rid our planet of nuclear weapons. To do so, it is imperative that the nuclear doctrine — which, in many respects, is an anachronism — be abandoned, in order to bring about an international order that would no longer be based on nuclear-weapon supremacy.

The second item, entitled “Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms”, seeks to address a major issue. It is undeniable, to be sure, that specific confidence-building measures are key elements that are necessary in any disarmament undertaking. These measures, which are aimed at establishing the conditions for peaceful coexistence and at improving international relations based on cooperation and solidarity, can contribute to providing a genuine impetus to the disarmament process.

The exhaustive review of the issue of specific confidence-building measures in the area of conventional weapons requires, however, that we take into consideration certain regional realities and that we transcend the restrictions that its scope, as proposed here, imposes, in order to allow it to incorporate other elements that are key to building confidence.

In addition, thoughtful consideration of this item requires, we believe, that we avoid the use of controversial concepts and that we opt for a language of compromise that duly takes account of the legitimate concerns of all delegations. The success of our work on this subject will depend on how objective our approach is and how realistic the proposals are.

In this regard, my country has always supported initiatives to promote specific confidence-building measures and believes that any approach in this area must be comprehensive and aimed at strengthening
peace and security and contributing to both conventional and nuclear disarmament.

We believe that the establishment of genuine confidence must be comprehensive and non-discriminatory in terms of its scope and approach. Dissociating conventional weapons from the general context of disarmament and setting them up as a separate area for confidence-building measures would be based on a partial approach that may not allow us to achieve the necessary objectives.

To be truly constructive, confidence-building measures in the area of conventional weapons must be based on a set of actions — military and non-military — that are mutually reinforcing. As a result, progress made in the area of nuclear disarmament will definitely establish an atmosphere that is conducive to confidence-building in the area of conventional weapons.

Political and economic factors that could have direct effects on security are core elements that have the potential of giving full expression to the establishment of confidence. Indeed, this is a prerequisite for the success of this process, which should be gradual and phased.

Confidence between States will increase only if we respect universally recognized principles, in particular those set out in the Charter of the United Nations, in particular the right to self-defence; the non-use of force or the threat of the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of States; non-interference in the internal affairs of States; the peaceful settlement of disputes; the sovereign equality of States; and the right of peoples to self-determination.

Confidence could also increase if there is implementation of the commitment undertaken by States to reduce their military spending and to end the development of new types of both nuclear and conventional weapons. Indeed, continuing to develop ever more sophisticated and destructive weapons, which would mean further production and stockpiling of arms, will in no way promote prospects for disarmament or help to build confidence.

This kind of tendency would, on the contrary, undermine any effort to promote confidence between States and would favour certain States over others, whose security would be greatly diminished.

Economic measures and the establishment of an equitable, non-marginalizing international economic environment are also elements that will contribute to strengthening the process of confidence-building. The allocation to economic and social development of funds freed up by reductions in military spending and by disarmament will prove to be just as important a confidence-building measure.

My delegation remains convinced that transparency in the area of conventional weapons, like confidence-building measures elsewhere, cannot be ensured in the absence of an approach that encompasses all aspects related to weapons, and all types of weapons. It must stem from a balanced treatment of the different elements relating to armaments and take into account inseparable aspects such as national capacities for production and the procurement and stockpiling of weapons.

Before I conclude, I should like to say that, at this crucial stage in our history, multilateralism is a precious asset and a useful framework in our common quest for general and complete disarmament. At a time when the Conference on Disarmament is facing an impasse, I should like to share with members the hope that the Commission — the only body in which deliberations can be held to consider and define guiding disarmament principles — will continue to be the framework for productive and fruitful exchanges that it has always been.

My delegation, which will lend its full support to the Commission, intends, as usual, to contribute to the Commission’s work in an open and constructive spirit with a view to reaching agreement on the two substantive agenda items.

Mr. Hu Xiaodi (China) (spoke in Chinese): The Chinese delegation would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Commission at its current session and stands ready to fully cooperate with you and with other delegations. I should also like to take this opportunity to thank Ms. Diane Quarless of Jamaica for her contribution as Chairperson of the previous session.

We listened attentively to the statement made earlier by Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala. The Chinese delegation would like to express its great appreciation and thanks to Mr. Dhanapala for the contributions he has made to disarmament over the past five years.
With the rapid development of globalization, countries are becoming more and more interdependent, both economically and in terms of security. While the international security situation has been stable on the whole, uncertainty and unpredictability are increasing sharply. Military confrontation caused by disputes over territory, resources, religion and self-interest continues. Non-traditional security threats characterized by terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction have grown. Against that backdrop, the multilateral disarmament and arms control process is facing a severe test.

To promote the sound development of disarmament and arms control, we need to create a favourable international security environment. To that end, we advocate a new security concept based on mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation, with the aim of establishing common security for all countries. We stand for resolving conflicts through dialogue and cooperation. We are committed to multilateralism and to the democratization of international relations.

The two issues on this year’s agenda — ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament and practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms — are both important and complex; they have been under consideration for two years, and members have made many relevant proposals.

Since the invention of nuclear weapons, mankind has been exploring ways to eliminate them. It is regrettable that we have not been able to find effective and workable solutions. Some recent developments have been particularly worrisome. First, although the quantity of nuclear weapons has been declining, their role in the national strategies of certain countries has not been drastically reduced. Secondly, the development of missile defence systems and of weapons for use in outer space has had negative effects on global strategic stability. Thirdly, the deterioration of the international security environment has increased the risk of nuclear proliferation.

In the light of the foregoing, China advocates the following.

Countries should pursue a new security concept based on mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation, and should work to promote a just and equitable new international political and economic order so as to ensure common security for all and to create a favourable international environment for nuclear disarmament.

Countries should refrain from introducing weapons into outer space. To that end, they must conclude relevant international instruments through negotiation, with a view to maintaining global strategic balance and stability and to promoting nuclear disarmament. Nuclear disarmament measures, including interim measures, should be based on the principles of global strategic stability and undiminished security for all, thus contributing to enhanced international peace and security.

The nuclear-weapon States possessing the largest nuclear arsenals bear a special responsibility for nuclear disarmament and should take the lead in reducing their nuclear arsenals drastically and in a legally binding way. The nuclear weapons affected by those reductions should be destroyed. That will create conditions enabling other nuclear-weapon States to join in the nuclear disarmament process. The reduction of nuclear weapons should be carried out in an effectively verifiable, irreversible and legally binding manner.

All nuclear-weapon States should undertake not to be the first to use nuclear weapons and not to use or to threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones at any time or under any circumstances. International legal instruments to that effect should be concluded.

Nuclear-weapon States should withdraw to their own territories all nuclear weapons that they have deployed abroad. Countries that have not done so should sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as soon as possible so that the Treaty may enter into force at an early date, in accordance with its provisions. Nuclear-weapon States should continue to observe the moratorium on nuclear testing.

The Conference on Disarmament, in Geneva, should, at an early date, agree on a work programme to begin substantive work on such important issues as nuclear disarmament, banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and preventing an arms race in outer space.

Those measures will lead to the negotiation and conclusion of a treaty on the complete prohibition and total destruction of nuclear weapons, thus paving the way for a world free of nuclear weapons.
The establishment of concrete and practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms will not only be conducive to sound development of the disarmament cause, but will also be useful in easing regional tensions and in defusing “hotspot” issues. On the other hand, neither disarmament measures nor the establishment of confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms can proceed without a favourable international security environment. Therefore, we call for efforts to build a just, reasonable, tolerant and cooperative world.

The world is diverse, and so are the means to achieve security. As we establish confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms, we should take various situations into account and should endorse principles such as seeking common ground while setting aside differences, making gradual progress, maintaining a voluntary approach and achieving undiminished security for all.

In recent years, China has been exploring ways to establish confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. Since 1996, China has been advocating a new security concept based on mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation, with the aims of enhancing trust through dialogue and of promoting security through cooperation. Our actions have proven this new security concept to be feasible.

In 1996 and 1997, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and China signed an Agreement on confidence-building in the military field in the border areas and an Agreement on mutual reduction of military forces in the border areas.

On 15 July 2001, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and China signed the Declaration of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and declared the founding of that organization. The six countries decided to cooperate extensively in the security, political, anti-terrorist, economic, cultural and technological fields, enhance mutual trust and good-neighbourliness and maintain regional peace and stability. The Shanghai spirit, with mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for diversified cultures and the quest for common development as its basic elements, has become a principle governing the relationships among the organization’s members.

On 4 November 2002, China and countries of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) signed the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, committing themselves to exploring possible means to build confidence on the basis of equality and mutual respect.

Last year, the General Assembly adopted its resolution 57/63, the first in the disarmament and non-proliferation field to stress multilateralism. In the present situation, it is all the more necessary to enhance the role of the Disarmament Commission as the sole multilateral deliberative disarmament mechanism. For many years, the Commission has been the source of valuable proposals in promoting negotiations on arms control and disarmament treaties. Norms formulated in this forum have become relevant guidelines. Therefore, it is very important to maintain and further develop the guiding role of the Disarmament Commission; any attempt to weaken or abandon this organ will only be detrimental to the disarmament process.

Before this session began, the Chairmen of the two Working Groups submitted their documents. Taking them as a basis, we are prepared to seek agreement on a final document which, we hope, will appropriately reflect China’s positions and proposals. The Chinese delegation is ready to cooperate with all other parties to contribute to the success of this session.

Ms. Inoguchi (Japan): At the outset, Sir, let me congratulate you most warmly on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at its 2003 session. Our greetings are extended also to the other members of the Bureau. This year’s session, under your chairmanship, is extremely important because we must conclude discussion for this three-year cycle and reach a consensus on guidelines on substantive matters. I can assure you that you will have my delegation’s full support and cooperation towards the successful outcome of the session.

We highly appreciate the efforts made by the Chairpersons of the two Working Groups, who produced working papers on nuclear disarmament and on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. We hope we will be able successfully to adopt a final document by consensus following fruitful deliberations.

In relation to the substantive agenda items of the Disarmament Commission — “Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament” and “Practical confidence-building measures in the field of
conventional arms” — allow me to state my delegation’s views and basic positions on nuclear disarmament and on conventional weapons.

It is the fervent wish of Japan, as the only country to have experienced the devastation caused by nuclear bombs, to see the realization of a peaceful, safe, nuclear-weapon-free world, as well as the elimination of weapons of mass destruction of all kinds. We believe that the most effective way to achieve that goal is through practical and concrete steps of nuclear disarmament, on which the States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) agreed in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference. Therefore, at the General Assembly we submitted a draft resolution entitled “A path to the total elimination of nuclear weapons”, adopted as resolution 57/78, which requested Member States to implement the 13 practical steps towards implementation of article VI of the NPT, including a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. The adoption of that resolution with overwhelming support, including that of three nuclear-weapon States, clearly proved to the world that the entire international community is as earnest as it has ever been in its desire for nuclear disarmament. In that connection, let me put forward several basic thoughts of my Government regarding nuclear disarmament.

First, in the process of nuclear disarmament it is significant that the United States Senate has ratified the Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions between Russia and the United States; Russian ratification is also greatly anticipated. We earnestly hope for the early entry into force of the Treaty and its steady implementation by both the United States and Russia. We also welcome unilateral nuclear disarmament measures taken by France and the United Kingdom. We urge all nuclear-weapon States to further reduce their nuclear arsenals and oppose the accumulation of such weapons.

Secondly, Japan considers that the maintenance and strengthening of the NPT regime is essential in achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world. I believe that the legitimacy of the NPT persists despite the continuation of nuclear activities not under safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and severe challenges to the NPT regime posed by cases of non-compliance and by States outside the Treaty. We have been particularly encouraged by Cuba’s accession to the NPT and by the effort by Timor Leste, which is expected to follow suit shortly.

Multilateral disarmament treaties such as the NPT represent the fruit of efforts which we, as Members of the United Nations, have made to provide peace and stability for the entire human community, as well as the moral high ground which we have reached as we have worked together with tolerance, patience and cooperation. Coming from the only country affected by nuclear weapons, it is my wish that we will be able to work together peacefully to overcome problems associated with a lack of universality of and/or compliance with the NPT and to protect and strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime, not only for our own generation, but, as the Chairman said in his opening statement, also for generations to come.

In that regard, Japan, being a country of East Asia, is seriously concerned with steps taken by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. Although I am fully aware that the Disarmament Commission is not the most appropriate forum in which to discuss the security matters of any particular region, including the Korean peninsula, I cannot help but call for the peaceful resolution of the problems of our region. I firmly believe that for every country in East Asia, including the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, multilateralism does indeed matter, and that we all share the view that erosion of the credibility of multilateral disarmament treaties is not in the interest of any country of East Asia. As the international community is today confronted with mounting uncertainties and difficulties, it is expected that the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea will show political wisdom and cooperate in reducing the uncertainties in East Asia by staying with the NPT and the IAEA safeguards system.

I believe that there exists a strong common interest among all those associated with the Korean peninsula’s security problems to solve those problems through dialogue and peaceful means and to take forthcoming, constructive and courageous initiatives to de-escalate and to resolve the situation in a manner that will enable us to tell our children how political wisdom and diplomatic skills can make a profound difference.

I shall now turn to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). In order to strengthen the NPT regime, concrete and practical steps must be taken. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is
a milestone instrument among such steps. It is truly regrettable, however, that this Treaty has not yet come into force more than six years after its adoption by the General Assembly in September 1996.

Japan would like to continue to urge those States which have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty. One such example is the joint statement of 18 foreign ministers, including the Foreign Minister of Japan, issued last September in New York. Japan is also engaging in consultations with States signatories to facilitate the ratification process in Vienna. Pending entry into force of the Treaty, however, the moratoriums on any nuclear-weapon-test explosion or any other nuclear explosion should continue to be observed by all States concerned.

I turn now to the Conference on Disarmament. The Conference should resolve its impasse in its programme of work. It is extremely disappointing that the Conference has neither commenced negotiations on a treaty to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, nor established an ad hoc committee to deal with nuclear disarmament. I strongly believe that it is high time for States members of the Conference to overcome their differences relating to mandates and to resume their substantive work towards the common objective of strengthening international security through multilateral disarmament.

Japan places the highest priority on the commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). Pending agreement on a programme of work, Japan is interested in working on two tracks. One is to keep momentum and maintain technical expertise by intensifying the knowledge base of the issues that are most likely to be addressed once negotiations start in the Conference on Disarmament by providing the opportunity to first discuss these issues outside the Conference. With this aim, for example, Japan, jointly with Australia and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), last week in Geneva organized a workshop on verification. The objective was to derive generic lessons from existing verification regimes in multilateral disarmament conventions and to analyse whether and how these lessons can be utilized in the creation of new verification regimes, inter alia, that of the FMCT.

The other effort is to activate substantive discussion on FMCT in plenary meetings of the Conference on Disarmament. In the Conference plenary meeting held on 20 February, Japan made a comprehensive substantive statement wherein it laid out various aspects of technical deliberation, including issues of scope, materials to be monitored, possibilities for a verification system and legal arrangements. Generic parameters for the verification regime — such as how to ensure the correctness and completeness of the initial declaration; how to guarantee sufficient assurances from routine inspections; how to detect undeclared activities; how to protect sensitive information in the framework of verification; how to ensure cost-effectiveness and cost efficiency; and how to create a verification system that can respond flexibly to technological progress — are among the issues we discussed. Certainly these discussions will not constitute negotiations; however, they will prepare delegations to begin negotiations immediately once a programme of work is agreed upon.

I turn now to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Japan also attaches great importance to the universalization of the Additional Protocol of the IAEA safeguards. For this purpose, we organized the International Conference on Wider Adherence to Strengthened IAEA Safeguards in Tokyo in December 2002, which reaffirmed the importance of the universalization of this Protocol.

I would now like to outline our main comments concerning the working paper.

First, on nuclear disarmament, in chapter IV of the working paper, concrete ways and means of achieving nuclear disarmament, derived from the 13 steps agreed to in the 2000 NPT Review Conference, are outlined. We should make use of this set of steps, which, I believe, enjoys broad support among United Nations Member States. It as a viable path to promote nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Secondly, as for the fourth special session on disarmament, we should carefully follow discussions in the working group, keeping in mind that a realistic approach needs to be adopted towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Thirdly, with respect to the idea of an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers, the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Reducing nuclear danger” concludes that the time is
“not yet ripe for the consideration of interim measures leading up to the convening of an international conference”. (A/57/401, p. 1)

My Government is of a similar view that the idea may well be pursued under an environment more favourable than the current one.

I would now like to present our general views on conventional arms. It would be of great benefit if the international community were able to produce a set of guidelines on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms in the form of a United Nations document, and I look forward to concrete results being produced from discussions in the Disarmament Commission.

One of this year’s most important events in the field of conventional arms is the first United Nations biennial meeting on small arms and light weapons, which will commence on 7 July. As Chair-designate of that meeting, I am making every possible effort to ensure its success and that the lead-up to this meeting is a robust multilateral United Nations process. It is my hope that we shall come to the United Nations in July to work together to make a difference in the effectiveness of implementing the Programme of Action adopted in 2001, in the impact of cooperation among States, and in the reduction of the number of victims and tragedies caused by small arms and light weapons around the world. In this context, I would like to ask all members to kindly bear in mind the following points.

First, I would appreciate it very much if members could submit their national reports on the implementation of the Programme of Action well in advance of the meeting so that sufficient time can be given for the necessary preparations. I would like to remind all members that the Secretariat, through its note verbale of 13 January, requested such reports to be submitted on a voluntary basis by 30 April.

Secondly, I would like to encourage members and their Government officials to speak of the significance of small arms disarmament in relevant speeches and statements so as to make this issue a priority in the field of disarmament.

In 1991, based on General Assembly resolution, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms was established. It is hoped that this Register will enhance transparency measures related to conventional weapons information and help to build confidence among Member States. In this connection, we are pleased to hear some voices from the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Weapons proposing such ideas as the inclusion of small arms and light weapons, a review of the categories and a broadening of the scope.

With respect to confidence-building measures on conventional weapons, we look forward to a conclusion resulting from the working group in order to enhance information exchange. Various ideas have surfaced to date, including the establishment of a web site showing information provided on a voluntary basis by Member States, the organization of workshops and seminars, the establishment of an informal forum in the margins of the First Committee and research by UNIDIR. These ideas, of course, merit consideration.

Furthermore, I would like to emphasize the need to try our utmost to design confidence-building measures and disarmament programmes in a way that could help craft reconciliation among conflicting parties. Since most of the violent conflicts around the world today seem to be deep-rooted, disarmament may not necessarily lead to peace unless it brings people together and helps them to initiate a process of reconciliation. We need to look beyond the concept of disarmament and development and focus more sharply on the concept of disarmament and reconciliation.

It is not an easy task to produce a universal result in a multilateral framework, and we should not be excessively ambitious. To date, the Disarmament Commission has provided positive results in the fields of practical disarmament and nuclear weapon-free zones, and I sincerely hope that we will be able to reach a significant conclusion once again this time. It is the strong desire of my Government that all participating States work together to achieve a successful outcome.

Mr. Balarezo (Peru) (spoke in Spanish): I will attempt to highlight some of the basic ideas informing Peru’s position on this important issue, setting aside some considerations that are, of course, important. But I think time is always very important in these meetings.

I wish to begin by congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, on presiding over this session of the Disarmament Commission, and I welcome the other new members of the Bureau. I wish particularly to congratulate Mr. Dhanapala on all his years of effort
and work, which enabled us to attempt to identify the critical areas of our work. Through his proposals and his commitment to disarmament, he has encouraged us to seek concrete results. We especially thank him for his presentation of the enormous challenges in achieving the objectives we have set.

It is astounding that $1 trillion is being spent on arms to destroy. It is astounding because just 5 per cent of that amount, $50 to $75 billion a year, would eradicate extreme poverty for 2 billion people on the planet. It is truly tragic that a vicious circle is created by increases in armaments spending: attempting to tackle security creates more insecurity. Meanwhile, we are spending resources that could solve immediate problems. In the end, this is part of our history. We must confront it and realize the commitments we seek.

With respect to basic principles: unilateral, bilateral and regional initiatives are truly important. We resolutely support all efforts in that area. But multilateralism and multilateral efforts — the need to work for new agreements on nuclear disarmament and for strengthening existing multilateral agreements — constitute one of the principles that Peru has always advocated and supported. In the context of multilateralism and international cooperation, the strengthening of multilateral institutions such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and of agreements such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a key element of disarmament, given the objective we have set: the general and complete disarmament of nuclear weapons.

We believe that irreversibility is another basic principle. We believe that we must work to find negative security guarantees that are legally binding on all States. Obviously, we have to work for non-proliferation.

In that context, I wish to stress that the NPT is a key element of disarmament activities. Of course, we aspire to the realization of the 13 practical steps established at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. We hope that at some point there will be agreement and a clear consensus among the Members of the United Nations on the establishment of a monitoring system that includes the submission of national reports enabling us to verify the progress made on nuclear disarmament.

Peru reiterates the importance of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Together with other States, through various activities, we continue to call for broadening the Treaty so that all States become signatories. Certainly, as a member of the first nuclear-weapon-free zone, established by the Treaty of Tlatelolco, we cannot but insist on the strengthening and consolidation of the treaties regulating existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and on the creation of new nuclear-weapon-free zones. As well, we support the idea of convening a conference of the secretariats of the various nuclear-weapon-free zones. Perhaps that idea, towards which the secretariat of the Treaty of Tlatelolco has been working, will be implemented.

Peru views with satisfaction the progress made on the document on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. Peru considers arms reduction to be a question not only of nuclear weapons but also of conventional weapons. We attach particular importance to all confidence-building measures and measures directly related to the reduction and limitation of defence spending and conventional weapons expenditures. We have developed initiatives at the bilateral and regional levels. I cannot but mention the signing of the Andean Charter for Peace and Security and for the Limitation and Control of Foreign Defence Spending, which was adopted by five Andean countries of South America in June 2002. I would also mention the Declaration on a South American zone of peace and cooperation, signed in Guayaquil in July 2002.

Of course, in our view, these initiatives on the limitation and control of expenditures for conventional weapons are very much related to efforts to reduce poverty and to promote sustainable development in our countries — in other words, spending more on development and less on arms.

In conclusion, I should like to underscore what I said at the beginning — that is, that there is a great deal to be said, but that obviously time does not allow — and that is why I have tried to focus on a few aspects that I deem to be of greatest importance.

Lastly, we also attach great importance to the United Nations Register regarding the transfer of conventional weapons and military expenditures. We commend the Secretariat for having convened this group of experts, which has already begun its work of determining how the Register can be improved.
We would like to see whether the categories remain relevant, whether there is a need to expand and update them, whether it is necessary to establish some new kind of methodology — in other words, we hope that this expert group will be able to submit a substantive document, so that Register can be improved and some decisions taken in its regard.

I wish to conclude by reaffirming Peru’s position regarding the important role that the Disarmament Commission must play as an appropriate, relevant and extremely important forum for dialogue and open debate, and we assure the Commission of our full cooperation and our readiness to contribute to this year’s work.

The Chairman: I wish to thank the representative of Peru for having kept his statement within the prescribed time-frame, thereby giving the other three speakers the possibility of addressing the Commission.

Mr. Faessler (Switzerland) (spoke in French): Allow me, Sir, to begin by expressing, on behalf of my delegation, our pleasure at seeing you chairing the Disarmament Commission. Your extensive personal experience in the field of disarmament and arms control and your country’s very constructive commitment in this area are key assets for the success of our work, which is more important than ever given the current situation, which is marked by significant crises.

In this current situation, which is marked, on a number of continents, by serious conflicts and tensions related to disarmament issues, our current session takes on particular importance. You may, Sir, count on the full support and cooperation of my delegation in the exercise of your functions.

Under the current difficult circumstances, and as my country participates for the first time as a State Member of the United Nations in the work of the Disarmament Commission, I would like to begin by recalling here the fundamental principles of Switzerland’s disarmament and arms control policies.

First, my country supports all multilateral efforts in the area of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation that are aimed at concrete and verifiable results. My country has ratified all multilateral treaties open to it in this area, and it attaches the greatest importance to their full and strict implementation. Let me in this context refer in particular to the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons; that Convention’s first Review Conference will take place at the Hague in a few weeks.

Secondly, Switzerland supports all measures aimed at improving transparency in the area armaments as concerns the import and export of war matériel, including small arms and light weapons, in particular confidence-building measures at the global and regional levels that are aimed at reducing the risk of surprise attacks and of the accidental triggering of a war.

Thirdly, and lastly, remaining true to its traditions, my country reiterates the importance of the application of the norms of international humanitarian law with respect to the development, production and use of conventional weapons. To be sure, the uncontrolled and indiscriminate spread and use of these weapons have devastating effects in humanitarian terms and threaten the security and development of the most underprivileged countries.

In this context, let me highlight the Convention on the prohibition of anti-personnel landmines and the negotiations on explosive remnants of war in the context of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and of their delivery systems, and the possibility that non-State actors may gain access to these weapons, represent a serious challenge to international peace and security. The fears to which the frightening prospects in this area give rise call for a re-examination of the very foundations of collective security. In order to meet this challenge, my country, as I mentioned earlier, is actively involved in multilateral disarmament and arms-control efforts, and firmly commits fully to respect existing obligations.

Switzerland is alarmed and disappointed by violations of contractual obligations in the framework of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Such acts endanger not only the integrity and implementation of a core pillar of international security, but also the efforts aimed at achieving that Treaty’s universality. It is our responsibility to preserve the NPT’s integrity and to ensure respect for the obligations undertaken thereunder.
However, we agree that these efforts must also be accompanied by specific and sustained commitments on the part of the nuclear-weapon States. We hope that the upcoming second session of the Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference will provide an opportunity to translate these words into reality. My country also attaches paramount importance to the immediate resumption of negotiations, at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for military purposes.

Switzerland supports an active and constructive role on the part of the United Nations in the area of disarmament, weapons control and non-proliferation. It supports the development of dialogue and cooperation among the main bodies of the United Nations in the area of disarmament — the First Committee, the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament.

The Disarmament Commission, as a specialized, deliberating body of the General Assembly, plays an important role within the United Nations system in the area of disarmament. It is the key body for in-depth consideration of specific disarmament issues. In this regard, my country would like to call on all our partners in the Disarmament Commission to participate, in an open and positive spirit, in the final deliberations of this triennial cycle, in order to reach a consensus on the key issues — that is, ways and means of achieving nuclear disarmament and confidence-building measures in the context of conventional weapons.

Switzerland expresses its appreciation Mr. Odei Osei of Ghana and to Ms. Gabriela Martinic for the revised versions of their reports. Let me take this opportunity to commend Mr. Alaa Isaa and Mr. Santiago Mourao of Brazil on their election to chair the two working groups.

These two reports on nuclear disarmament and confidence-building measures represent a solid basis upon which to conclude the current cycle of the Disarmament Commission and to produce concrete results.

With respect to nuclear disarmament, it must be pointed out that, regrettably, humankind continues to be exposed to the dangers posed by the threat of the use of nuclear weapons, either by accident, on purpose or by terrorist groups. The total elimination of nuclear weapons and the creation of a world free of such weapons remains essential. In order to achieve this objective, the international community as a whole must take measures that will rapidly produce concrete results. This has been reaffirmed in various forums, particularly during special sessions of the General Assembly as well as during its regular sessions. Switzerland stands ready actively to commit itself to this path.

A working group of the Disarmament Commission has been charged with studying practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons — measures that create confidence and are neither coercive nor normative. Their ultimate objectives are to strengthen international peace and security and help prevent war.

At the regional level, there has already been extremely positive experience with confidence-building measures, particularly in the context of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. In that regard, I should like to draw the Commission’s attention to a working paper on confidence-building measures that Switzerland submitted to the Disarmament Commission in 2000. We have asked the Secretariat to distribute that document.

The confidence-building measures that have been achieved in various regions are complementary and help to strengthen peace, security and stability at all levels. Globally, good governance in the military and security sectors is an important confidence-building measure. Such a measure should enable us to reduce uncertainty and unpredictability in international relations, to highlight the peaceful intentions of States and to improve the domestic security environment. For several years, a number of countries — including Switzerland — have committed themselves to the Disarmament Commission’s consideration of such a measure.

In order to discuss the potential of such a confidence-building measure in greater depth, I should like to draw attention to a seminar organized by the Non-Governmental Organizations Committee on Disarmament, Peace and Security and supported by the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland. The seminar, entitled “Sector governance and confidence-building measures: Regional experiences — global standards?”, will take place on 3 April from 1.15 to 2.45 p.m. in Conference Room 4. It will be followed the next day
Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil): I wish to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election and, through you, to congratulate all the other members of the Bureau. You may rest assured of our cooperation for a fruitful session. I should also like to pay tribute to Ms. Diana Quarles of Jamaica for her competent work as Chairperson last year. I wish to commend Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala, under whose leadership the Department for Disarmament Affairs is playing an invigorated role. I thank him for his presentation before the Commission.

We meet today in challenging circumstances that could have adverse and long-standing effects on the work of the United Nations, not to mention the great suffering and desolation being visited on innocent people and the unavoidable toll on human life.

Although it is too early to evaluate the impact of recent events on our work or to draw lessons from them in order to better understand the international security environment that is taking shape, at least one thing stands out: disarmament has once again become a clear priority. Those events only highlight the fact that the accumulation of weapons, wherever it occurs, engenders mistrust; has a destabilizing effect among neighbours and on the international community as a whole; and helps to create an unstable, less predictable and less secure environment. That is an urgent reason for the strengthening of our collective efforts within the indispensable framework of the United Nations in order to maintain peace and security. And, as I stressed, disarmament is key to the achievement of that goal.

In that context, it is of little comfort to reiterate in our statements that the progress achieved has been modest, that important processes have been reversed and that the disarmament agenda has become paralysed. The time has come for us to thoroughly debate and discuss the causes of this stalemate and to embark on a comprehensive exercise to identify the relevant elements of the security context and to map out the road ahead. The Disarmament Commission is the agreed forum for that unavoidable exercise.

This is not a body that negotiates legally binding agreements; rather, it is the only universal forum dedicated to the long-term discussion of disarmament issues. Therefore, the delegation of Brazil hopes that the prerogative of discussing future disarmament options will be exercised here in the Commission without any constraints. Our delegation understands that it is in no one’s interest for the Commission to be seen as a failed forum for such deliberations. The need for results here is even more obvious if we consider the fact that the prospects for immediate progress and agreement in other disarmament forums are far from reassuring.

Confidence-building measures are a powerful instrument for generating trust. Their implementation has a positive impact on the consolidation of a more cooperative environment, essential for the full development of national and regional potential. Brazil’s bilateral, regional and multilateral experiences in this field confirm that reality. We encourage delegations to approach the upcoming discussions in an open spirit so that the Commission can better understand the implications and outcomes of confidence-building measures.

We appreciate the work that has been done by the outgoing Chairperson of Working Group II and the presentation of the working paper, which is a genuine effort to compile the views expressed by all delegations and provides an excellent basis for further discussion. We are sure that the Commission will be able to work constructively on this issue, whose importance has been highlighted by recent international developments.

My delegation is of the view that Member States should make better use of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as a confidence-building tool. We support that instrument and hope to see an increase in the number of participating countries. In that regard, we welcome the initiation of the process of reviewing the Register, and we hope that the Group of Experts will come up with suggestions and recommendations to further strengthen and promote it. We would also like to see broader participation in the United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures.

Regionally, the Americas are implementing an impressive number of confidence-building measures, with good results. Regional confidence-building measures have both influenced and are being influenced by the development of subregional and bilateral measures with Brazil’s neighbours. We look forward to a successful debate on this issue in Working Group II.
Unfortunately, the field of nuclear disarmament is still marked by distressing signs. The lack of progress in the Conference on Disarmament is alarming. Recent developments could hardly be construed as significant for the achievement of nuclear disarmament. At this moment, we are in the midst of a new review cycle of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The NPT is an important component of the international security architecture, particularly with regard to nuclear disarmament. Universalization and full compliance are of the essence as we commit ourselves to the strengthening of the Treaty. Universalization is our goal, and compliance by all States parties with all provisions of the Treaty — including through the 13 practical steps adopted by consensus in 2000 — is our responsibility.

At this particular juncture, Working Group I should seriously advance the debate on the question of nuclear disarmament. The next few weeks are an opportunity for a meaningful exchange of views on these issues. It is our expectation that we will be able to advance in the formulation of a substantive document for adoption at the end of this session.

In conclusion, I wish to underscore the conviction of my delegation that this should be a very positive session. At the United Nations we must make every effort to respond to the growing fears regarding the maintenance of international security and disarmament. A frank and substantive exchange of views in the two Working Groups, taking into account the dynamics of the real world outside this building and the need for concrete new ideas to further the cause of disarmament, could be a step in the right direction to reassure Member States and to reassure public opinion regarding the importance of the Disarmament Commission and to lay the foundations for the successful conclusion of this exercise.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): My delegation would also like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at its 2003 session. I wish to welcome back the chairpersons and vice-chairpersons of the two Working Groups, as well as the other members of the Bureau. Likewise, I would like to thank the respective chairpersons for their working papers, which we consider to be a sound basis for our work during this session.

The present session of the Disarmament Commission is being held at a time when the international community is faced with increasing and serious divisions on how to address non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control issues. At this juncture, when the world is faced with increased acts of terrorism and the possible use of weapons of mass destruction, countries are interested in lasting peace, and they desire new concepts and innovative ways to promote international security that reflect the global trend.

Already at the Commission’s 2000 session, my delegation expressed concern over the inability of the multilateral disarmament forums and the international community to substantively address issues that impact negatively on the maintenance of international peace and security through disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. The consequences of this failure are now felt throughout the world, including the Middle East. However, we hoped the situation could still be changed. The positive conclusion of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, as well as work in preparation for the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, precipitated these hopes.

Alas, two years down the line we find ourselves in a much more complicated situation, where the disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control regimes are under unprecedented stress characterized by the rise in the tendency towards unilateralism.

The post-cold-war security context demands that the world finally live up to the promises of the concept of common security that was forged at the creation of the United Nations. Greater security today is contingent on greater inclusiveness, not exclusiveness. Notions of moral or national superiority and the tendency to enforce those notions by military might must be replaced by consistent recourse to universally agreed-upon normal and legal mechanisms that will replace the law of force with the force of law.

For these reasons South Africa believes that our deliberations in the current session will let the Disarmament Commission live up to its expectations as the specialized deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery that allows for in-depth deliberations on specific issues, leading to the formulation of concrete
recommendations on those issues. In this connection my delegation looks forward to renewed enthusiasm for actively engaging in the substantive debates on the two agenda items before us. Failure to do so would call into question the value of the Commission as a disarmament forum, and it would make it imperative that we consider alternative working methods.

South Africa remains hopeful that our deliberations at this session on ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament, and on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons, will be focused. Only through focused consideration of these two items would the Commission remain a relevant deliberative body.

With regard to the first item — ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament — my delegation would like to make the following comments.

South Africa, like many other States, considers nuclear disarmament to be of utmost importance to the entire international community because of the devastating and indiscriminate effects of nuclear weapons on humankind and on the environment. It is for this reason that South Africa remains concerned over the lack of concrete progress related to nuclear disarmament. In this regard, a seeming rising tendency towards unilateralism and an apparent lack of political will among States to abide by mutually agreed international regimes are two examples that illustrate the lack of commitment to achieve progress in this field.

South Africa, like other non-nuclear-weapon States, welcomed the positive outcome of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. In particular we were pleased that the nuclear-weapon States made an unequivocal undertaking to the total elimination of their nuclear weapons. We viewed this as an important gesture that would in earnest set in motion practical ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament. We still hope that the nuclear-weapon States will honour their undertakings to further reduce their nuclear arsenals, to increase transparency with regard to their nuclear-weapon capabilities, to diminish the role for nuclear weapons in security policies and to further reduce their non-strategic weapons.

In addition to these undertakings, my delegation believes that there should be a clear commitment to achieve progress in certain areas. This includes the establishment of an appropriate subsidiary body in the Conference on Disarmament to deal with nuclear disarmament, and the negotiation and conclusion of a non-discriminatory, multilateral and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices.

Needless to say, a lot remains to be done to ensure a world free of nuclear weapons. Concrete agreed measures to reduce the operational status of nuclear weapons systems, such as de-alerting and removal of nuclear warheads from their delivery systems, are urgently required. We believe that to embark on a path that would seek to address these concerns would provide much-needed momentum for progress in the field of nuclear disarmament.

Furthermore, as South Africa played an active part in the negotiations for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the lack of progress regarding the early entry into force of that Treaty remains of concern to my delegation. The urgency of signatures and ratification was underlined by the Joint Ministerial Declaration in support of the CTBT, thus signifying the commitment that the 18 countries accord the entry into force of the Treaty. My delegation therefore calls upon those countries that have not signed or ratified the CTBT to do so as soon as possible, in particular those countries listed in annex 2 to the Treaty, whose ratification is required for the entry into force of the CTBT.

Before I comment on the second item on our agenda, I would like to reiterate an important position of my delegation. South Africa is of the view that this Commission’s deliberations on ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament should build upon — but in no way diminish — the undertakings given and agreements reached on a substantive agenda for nuclear disarmament at the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). In this regard, I wish to emphasize that South Africa will not lend its support to any effort that will undermine the success achieved at that Conference. Our deliberations should furthermore be in support of the process in the Conference on Disarmament and we should consider other tangible ways and means to positively address the core elements required to facilitate action and results in moving our disarmament agenda forward.
My delegation welcomes the non-paper prepared by the Chairperson of Working Group II on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. South Africa believes that the establishment of practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms is of positive significance to maintaining international peace and stability and reducing regional tensions.

South Africa is also of the view that the establishment of confidence-building measures must take into account regional idiosyncrasies. The build-up of conventional weapons beyond legitimate levels, even for purposes of self-defence, creates instability and regional conflicts. South Africa continues to believe that transparency, as a practical confidence-building measure, remains critical in the area of conventional arms. In this connection, South Africa welcomes the initiatives undertaken by various regions to implement the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. We believe that these initiatives are conducive to the enhancement of mutual understanding, trust and sound relations between countries and regions. We also view the adoption of the Programme of Action by consensus as an important step towards the goal of controlling the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

One month after the United Nations Conference on Small Arms in July 2001, States members of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) adopted the Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials in the SADC region. This Protocol is the first legally-binding instrument on the control of small arms and light weapons in Africa and was ratified by South Africa in March 2003. The stated objective of the Protocol is to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit manufacturing of; the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of; and trafficking in and possession and use of firearms, ammunition and other related materials in the SADC region. We believe that this agreement will assist SADC member States in the control of the legal manufacturing, possession and transfer of small arms in the subregion. It will also assist in preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit small arms trade, thereby enhancing transparency in armaments at the regional level.

In order to achieve these objectives, member States are to promote and facilitate close cooperation. Beyond these cooperative measures, the Protocol mandates its signatories to incorporate a range of measures in their national legislation, some of which relate to the coordination of procedures for the import, export and transit of firearms shipments; the regulation and centralized registration of all civilian-owned firearms in their territories; measures ensuring that proper controls are exercised over the manufacturing, possession and use of firearms, ammunition and other related materials; provisions promoting legal uniformity and minimum standards as to the manufacture, control, possession, import, export and transfer of firearms, ammunition and other related materials; provisions ensuring the standardized marking and identification of firearms at the time of manufacture, import or export; and provisions regulating firearm brokering.

The Protocol also contains provisions on the disposal of confiscated or unlicensed firearms, to the effect that these are to be normally destroyed; public awareness programmes; cooperation in the provision of mutual legal assistance; the establishment of an infrastructure for effective law enforcement, transparency and information exchange; and the enactment of national measures to curb corruption associated with the illicit manufacturing, possession and use of firearms and ammunition.

South Africa is participating in the Group of Governmental Experts in the development of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and believes that the Register can be a confidence-building measure. However, we also continue to be of the view that the scope of the current Register excludes some other aspects, such as small arms and light weapons. The inclusion of small arms and light weapons, explosives and non-lethal military equipment in the categories of the Register would greatly enhance its relevance and the participation of countries. The destruction of surplus and confiscated weapons continues to be of importance to South Africa in ensuring long-term security for the country and the region. The SADC region is the first subregion as a whole to adhere to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and, with the ratification of the treaty by Angola in July 2002, the subregion has taken a significant step towards reinforcing regional stability and trust.
South Africa also considers the destruction of surplus, confiscated or collected weapons no longer in use by Government forces as an important, practical and tangible measure to promote confidence among States in the field of conventional arms. It is for this reason that my Government has taken a principled decision to destroy all surplus, confiscated and obsolete small arms and light weapons, rather than sell them. In addition to this destruction, tons of conventional weapons and ammunition continue to be destroyed, in cooperation with the Government of Mozambique, during different phases of Operation Rachel.

The destruction of these weapons forms part of my Government’s commitment to regional efforts in southern Africa to create a peaceful and stable environment in support of much needed socio-economic development and poverty eradication. I wish to recall that my delegation, at our previous session, circulated a working paper in which we emphasized the value of surplus and collected weapons destruction as a practical confidence-building measure.

It is very important for those of us who hail from regions ravaged by the scourge of illicit arms trafficking to apply our minds to finding collective wisdom that will add impetus to our efforts to develop meaningful and practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. I need not repeat the adverse effects that the illicit transfer of conventional weapons, in particular small arms and light weapons, have on socio-economic development in some regions of the world. Suffice it to say that such measures, in our view, should equally seek to address the question of the lack of restraints in arms trade.

In conclusion, my delegation remains committed to working in this Commission and in all other disarmament and non-proliferation forums in order to achieve the total elimination of all nuclear weapons and to limit the numbers of conventional weapons to the minimum required for self-defence. To this end, my delegation stands ready to work with you, Sir, the Chairpersons of the two Working Groups, as well as all other delegations in pursuit of these goals.

**The Chairman:** The representative of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea has asked for the floor to speak in right of reply.

**Mr. Jon** (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea): The delegation of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea would like to respond to the statement of the Japanese delegation with respect to his remarks on the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula.

The nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula admits of no interference by Japan. As far as the nuclear issue is concerned, it is a matter directly related to the security of the Korean nation, as it is a product of the United States’ escalated hostile policy towards the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and its threats to mount a pre-emptive nuclear strike on it.

It is well known that Japan is in no position to guarantee the security of the Democratic People’s Republic. If there is any security issue between the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and Japan, both are committed to keeping promises made in the declaration not to do anything threatening each other’s security. The agreement and promises made between the countries should be observed on the basis of reciprocity under any circumstances. If either party ceases to implement its commitment, it is impossible for the other party to continue to fulfill its commitment. Pyongyang’s declaration remains valid only when it is respected by both sides. If Japan sincerely wants a peaceful solution to the issue, it will have to urge the United States to sign the non-aggression pact that the Democratic People’s Republic has already proposed in order defuse the current crisis on the Korean Peninsula.

**The Chairman:** Before adjourning the meeting, I wish to remind delegates that they have until 6 o’clock today to present their requests to intervene in the general debate.

The next meeting will convene at 3 p.m. The first speaker will be the representative of Greece, representing the members of the European Union.

*The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.*