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First Committee

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Official Records

President: Mrs. Juul (Norway)

The meeting was called to order at 9.40 a.m.

Agenda items 82 to 97 (*continued*)

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

The Chairperson: The Committee will first seek to conclude its thematic debate on conventional weapons. I will thus give the floor to those representatives who were unable to make statements yesterday. I would again kindly request delegations to keep their interventions as brief as possible.

Mr. Lezona (Congo) (*spoke in French*): My delegation is concerned about the illicit traffic in and proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which are a threat to international peace and security. The use of that category of weapons is disastrous for the international community. We know that more than 500,000 people — the majority of them civilians — are killed with such weapons every year, most of them during armed conflict. There are other consequences that are no less tragic, such as fear, poverty, disease, famine, violence and the mass displacement of populations. As to the scope of this disaster, these weapons are now considered weapons of mass destruction.

Today, the strengthening of international solidarity and cooperation is proving more necessary than ever in the fight against the illicit trade in small

arms and light weapons. That is why, to that end, the Government of the Republic of the Congo has always demonstrated resolve by encouraging cooperation among its organs and international organizations and civil society. That is also we are involved in the activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa to implement the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

The Congo, which experienced a civil war between 1997 and 1999, knows full well the impact of international cooperation, particularly in implementing policies aimed at the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants and at peacebuilding. Here, I should highlight the major role played by the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa in helping the 11 States of the subregion to promote confidence-building measures in order to prevent, manage and resolve the conflicts that often face them.

Indeed, given the many conflicts and persistent tensions that have afflicted most of these States over the past decade, the Committee felt the need to organize seminars and conferences on the crucial issues now before us. We could mention, among others, the seminar on the implementation in Central Africa of the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, held in July 1999 at Yaoundé; the subregional conference on the illicit

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circulation and proliferation of small arms and light weapons, held in October 1999 at N'Djamena; and the seminar on the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, held in May 2003 at Brazzaville.

The progressive implementation of the relevant decisions and recommendations of those seminars and conferences has enabled the States of Central Africa to achieve encouraging results, despite no lack of stumbling blocks. The non-aggression and mutual assistance pacts and the Protocol relating to the Establishment of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa, which are already in force, and the United Nations Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, established at Yaoundé, are just a few examples. That is why Congo, like other delegations of the States of the subregion, reaffirms its support for the Committee's activities. Moreover, we call on the Department for Disarmament Affairs to enhance the Committee's activities.

This year, thanks to the assistance of bilateral and multilateral partners, the Congo has been able to collect and destroy 12,800 light weapons and more than 112,000 rounds of ammunition. Here, we wish to thank the United Nations Development Programme, the European Union and the World Bank, which are providing valuable support to the Government of the Republic of the Congo to that end and in our peacebuilding efforts. We are realistic enough to understand that not all the illicit weapons in circulation in our country will be collected overnight. But it will not be possible to continue to use them if the ammunition supply is cut off.

Without adequate monitoring, weapons and ammunition coming from the legal trade can pass too easily into the hands of armed groups. That is why my delegation supports any initiative by the international community to develop and implement, within a national or subregional framework, measures to deal appropriately with the trade linked to the stockpiling of surplus conventional ammunition.

We also note that, owing to the porosity of borders and the lack of adequate weapons detection equipment, the gaps in national monitoring are increasing, revealing the extent to which the global trade needs rules that likewise have a global reach. My delegation is convinced that the time has come for the

international community to establish a treaty on the weapons trade that is effective and legally binding.

My delegation, which has always supported the relevant draft resolutions of the First Committee aimed at disarmament, non-proliferation and international security, will do the same this year. Therefore, we would also like to have the Committee's full support for the draft resolutions that we have co-sponsored on conventional weapons and regional disarmament and security measures, particularly those on assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them, the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, implementation of the Convention on Landmines, efforts towards an arms trade treaty and the activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa.

Mr. Boureima (Niger) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time that I have taken the floor, permit me at the outset to congratulate you, Madam, on your election as Chairperson of the First Committee. The delegation of the Niger wishes to assure you of its full cooperation in carrying out your lofty mission. I am convinced that, under your skilful and wise guidance, the work of our Committee will proceed in an ideal atmosphere and will be crowned with success.

The thematic debate on the issue of small arms and light weapons is very timely, since it is taking place only a short time after the holding, in July 2006, of the United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

Indeed, because of disagreements on a number of important aspects of this issue, the Conference could not produce an outcome document. That means that no new guidelines could be provided for a global follow-up mechanism to review progress in implementing of the Programme of Action in future, as highlighted in the Secretary-General's report. Such guidelines are essential, because, despite the progress made in implementing the Programme of Action, no action has yet been taken on important aspects of that issue, since they were not taken into account in 2001.

While we recognize that much remains to be done to curb the phenomenon of the circulation of small arms and light weapons, we are pleased that the

international community as a whole is paying close attention to that subject.

From the universal Organization and its specialized agencies to non-governmental and civil society organizations, together with regional and subregional organizations and States, everyone is concerned. At the United Nations, we welcome coordination of action on small arms through the relevant mechanism. The activities of UNICEF and the United Nations Development Programme, in cooperation with the Department for Disarmament Affairs, have had a positive impact in several regions of the world.

Africa, which for over a decade has had to face that scourge more than any other region, has not been inactive, either at the level of individual States or at the subregional and regional levels. Thus, the Second Continental Conference of African Governmental Experts and Regional Economic Communities on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, held in Windhoek, Namibia, in December 2005, after having considered the progress achieved in the implementation of the Programme of Action, adopted a common position, which the African ministers for foreign affairs endorsed at their meeting in Khartoum in January 2006. The common position reaffirms the Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons.

At the subregional level, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) should be congratulated and encouraged on the significant progress it has achieved in the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action and in its fight against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons with the conversion on 14 June 2006 of the 1998 Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons in West Africa into a legally binding instrument, the Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition, and Other Related Materials. We are pleased that the ECOWAS initiative was welcomed and may soon open the way to even more ambitious initiatives.

In that respect, we welcome the draft resolution submitted by the United Kingdom and entitled "Towards an arms trade treaty: establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms". My delegation

reaffirms its support for the draft, which is perfectly in line with my country's position and actions on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Niger, which encountered this phenomenon following an armed rebellion in the 1990s, has striven at the subregional and national levels to combat effectively and resolutely the trade in small arms and light weapons. Indeed, in 1994 the National Commission for the Monitoring and Collection of Illicit Arms was established by decree and national legislation was revised to allow for its adoption. The National Commission, in which civil society is represented at a 50-per cent level, has undertaken several steps allowing for the achievement of interesting results.

We have had a similar experience with our Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development, financed by the United Nations, for the training of trainers of military and security forces in the fight against the proliferation of small arms. Furthermore, we have launched a pilot project on the collection and destruction of illicit weapons and support for sustainable development; developed a national report on the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects; and organized the Flame of Peace event on 25 September 2000 and several mini-Flames.

The collection and destruction of weapons were facilitated by an amnesty law adopted in March 2003, which gave confidence to recalcitrant possessors of illicit weapons, and by concrete compensation awarded in exchange for weapons, such as in the Wells for Peace programme.

The results seen in Niger in its fight against the illicit trade and circulation of small arms and light weapons could not have been achieved without the valuable assistance of our partners, to whom we are sincerely grateful. However, if we are to preserve those gains, the assistance must be continued and increased.

Mr. Rodríguez García (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): While we understand the relevance of disarmament and conventional arms control, Cuba believes it appropriate to reiterate in this debate on conventional weapons that nuclear disarmament continues to be the highest priority issue in the sphere of international peace and security. The very existence

and ongoing qualitative development of nuclear arsenals, based on dangerous doctrines of domination, aggression and preventive wars, constitute the most serious threat to international peace and security and the main incentive for an accelerated global nuclear arms race.

We note with great concern the decisions of certain countries to develop and use conventional weapons of increasing sophistication and lethality. This Committee should consider the situation in depth, as it is scandalous that vast amounts of resources are spent every year on conventional weapons alone that could be used effectively to meet the requirements of disarmament and that a blind eye is turned to the principles of the United Nations Charter on the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security, with the least possible diversion of world human and economic resources towards armaments.

Furthermore, Cuba wishes to draw attention to the obvious imbalance that exists in the treatment accorded to certain categories of conventional weapons to the detriment of others, the impact of which is considerably more devastating. We share the humanitarian concerns over the widespread proliferation of small arms and light weapons, as well as the indiscriminate and irresponsible use of anti-personnel mines. However, such weapons — which in many cases constitute the main and even the sole defence tools of many countries — are the subject of disproportionate attention as compared to other, highly sophisticated conventional weapons used in wars of aggression and conquest waged against third-world countries.

In today's hostile international context, Cuba reiterates that States have the sovereign right to acquire, manufacture and possess conventional weapons to meet their legitimate security and defence needs. We regret the failure of the United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects to agree on a final document, due to the obstructionist attitude of one Member State. We hope that an effective follow-up mechanism will be created to ensure the full implementation of the Programme of Action. We also reaffirm our firm commitment to the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and

Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects.

Mr. Owoseni (Nigeria): Let me express the satisfaction of the Nigerian delegation at the efficient manner in which you, Madam, have been chairing the affairs of the First Committee thus far.

My delegation will speak on the issue of small arms and light weapons, under the conventional weapons cluster.

Against the backdrop of the impediments which the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons constitutes to the peace, stability, security and economic development of many developing countries, the Nigerian delegation has consistently advocated international measures to check the proliferation of those weapons in the national, regional and international arenas. The easy availability of those weapons continues to fuel, intensify and prolong conflicts, with the attendant catastrophic destruction of economic and social infrastructure in many developing countries, including in Africa. The proliferation of those weapons has also hindered global humanitarian efforts and exacerbated the phenomenon of child soldiers.

It is in realization of the negative impact of those weapons that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which initiated and faithfully maintained a moratorium on the importation and exportation of those arms, has now transformed that moratorium into a landmark Convention. Adopted in June this year, the Convention, inter alia, places a ban on arms transfers and their manufacturing materials into, from or through West Africa. Of particular significance for our region is the ban on the transfer of small arms and light weapons to non-State actors who have been implicated in the recurrent conflicts in our subregion and the attendant political instability and destruction of infrastructure. Under the Convention, a State member of ECOWAS shall be granted exemption for such transfers solely for purposes of legitimate national defence and security needs or participation in peacekeeping efforts, but those will have to receive the certification and approval of other member States.

Nigeria has always maintained that conflict prevention measures and the pursuit of negotiated solutions to conflicts remain the most effective approach to minimizing the demand for illicit small

arms and light weapons. Regrettably, the greatest obstacle to controlling the illicit proliferation of those weapons continues to be their easy accessibility to non-State actors. It is for that reason that my delegation has always called on the international community, and particularly on arms manufacturers and suppliers and brokering firms, to ensure that arms transfers are limited to Governments and licensed traders. There is also a need to agree on the imposition of sanctions on arms manufacturers and suppliers who divert their arms exports to illicit networks.

We reiterate our belief in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, which recommended the full implementation of the 2001 Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects as the key element in promoting long-term security and in creating conditions for the sustainable development of many developing countries, especially those in Africa. Furthermore, my delegation supports national efforts geared at complementing those at the subregional and international levels. Nigeria invites other Members of the United Nations to follow the example of ECOWAS in confronting the menace of illicit small arms trafficking in their various regions.

However, my delegation must underline its extreme disappointment over the inconclusive outcome of the first United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in July this year, and particularly its failure to agree on a final document, in spite of the overwhelming support for it that emerged at the Review Conference in June 2006. Notwithstanding that failure, we believe that all of us should be determined to move ahead.

For that reason, we strongly support the draft resolution on small arms and light weapons jointly sponsored by Japan, Colombia and South Africa. We are particularly delighted that recognition was accorded in the draft resolution to the need to convene the Biennial Meeting of States by 2008 to assess the implementation of the Programme of Action. By so doing, we will not only have overcome one of the major obstacles that led to the collapse of the last Review Conference, but will also have succeeded in ensuring an effective follow-up to the review process. My delegation therefore endorses the draft resolution

and will join it as a co-sponsor. We also call for similar support from all delegations in this Committee.

Nigeria welcomes the initiative towards an eventual elaboration of an international arms trade treaty. It has come at an auspicious moment, when disarmament is at a crossroads. We reiterate our support for the initiative based on the expectation that such a treaty would establish a common international standard on arms transfers, regulate the international trade in arms and ensure their non-diversion to unauthorized end users. We shall work closely with interested delegations for the success of that goal, and we invite other delegations to join in that noble course.

The Chairperson: Several representatives have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind delegations that the number of interventions in the exercise of the right of reply for any delegation at a given meeting should be limited to two per item. The first intervention in the exercise of the right of reply for any delegation on any item at a given meeting should be limited to 10 minutes, and the second intervention should be limited to five minutes.

I now call those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Vasiliev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I have a brief statement to make. We would like to exercise our right of reply regarding the statement made on 13 October by the representative of the Republic of Moldova concerning the uncontrolled production and proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic and the alleged flow of Russian small arms and light weapons into the conflict in that region.

I draw attention to the fact that, as of 1 December 2005, the European Union's monitoring group has been in official operation on the Ukraine-Moldova border. It seeks, inter alia, to observe and monitor the border, with particular attention to the Transdniestria sector. The group has yet to observe any widespread smuggling of weapons, ammunition, explosives, narcotics, or psychotropic or radioactive substances across the border, concerning which the group reports periodically to the European Union, Ukraine and Moldova.

Recently, in its September session in Kishinev this year, Mr. David Wood, the Project Coordinator of the British non-governmental organization Saferworld,

submitted a report to the South Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons. The report was drafted on the basis of a consultative meeting with representatives of the Government of Moldova and of Transdniestria. The conclusion of the experts was that illicit transfers of weapons took place up to 2001; but not since.

The same conclusion was also drawn regarding the manufacture of small arms and light weapons in the mid-1990s, aimed at maintaining the security forces of Transdniestria. According to research, more than 4,000 units of small arms and light weapons are held by the civilian population of Transdniestria. The total number of firearms victims in Transdniestria in 2005 was 15 people. We should bear in mind that, according to the same report, of the total of 113,000 weapons held by civilians in Moldova, more than 53,000 are held illicitly.

As regards the assertion concerning the flow of firearms from the arsenals of Russian peacekeepers and small groups of Russian forces in Transdniestria, the monitoring recently carried out by the Ministry of Defence and by the Russian accounting office did not identify any such fact.

We feel that the most reliable guarantee regarding the dissemination of small arms and light weapons in that conflict area is a speedy solution, which Russia is actively calling for. We feel that the plan we have proposed to settle the situation should enjoy the support of the Moldovan leadership.

Mr. Kim Kwang Il (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea rejects the allegations concerning the Democratic People's Republic of Korea made the day before yesterday by the United States delegation.

Our nuclear test is entirely attributable to the United States nuclear threat, sanctions and pressure. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has exerted every possible effort to settle the nuclear issue through dialogue and negotiation, prompted by its sincere desire to realize the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. However, the United States responded to our patient and sincere efforts and magnanimity with sanctions and blockade.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea was compelled to substantially prove its possession of

nuclear weapons to protect its sovereignty and right to existence from the daily-mounting danger of war from the United States. The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would like to stress again that, although it conducted the nuclear test because of the United States, it remains unchanged in its will to denuclearize the peninsula through dialogue and negotiation.

Mr. Tulbure (Republic of Moldova): I, too, will be very brief. I would like to thank the representative of the Russian Federation for the information provided and to say the following.

Recently, the press confirmed the information provided by our Russian friend that Russian arms dumps in Moldova had been inspected by a group of generals and officers from the Russian Ministry of Defence. According to them, the group did not find any cases of weapons or armaments disappearing and no inappropriate conditions in the maintenance of armaments. It was also said that 21,000 units of arms remain stocked in Transdniestria, Moldova.

In that context, Moldova draws international attention to the fact that the data provided by the Russian side can be confirmed by no other source. The real content of the armament stocks is also not known. In spite of repeated reports drafted by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Moldovan Government and the OSCE mission in Moldova, the Transdniestrian arms dumps continue to be inaccessible for any international inspection whatsoever. Hence, neither the Moldovan Government nor the international community, represented by the competent international organizations, has any real data about the number and lists of ammunitions stocked in Transdniestria, Moldova.

In those circumstances, we consider irrelevant the information based on Russian sources, and we reiterate the need to conduct an international inspection of the Russian Federation's arms dumps situated in Moldova in order to keep transparent the process of preserving and withdrawing armaments.

As to the need ultimately to settle the conflict, we are in total agreement and are fighting to settle it, but the main obstacle to the final settlement to the conflict in Transdniestria is the presence of the Russian troops that are illegally deployed there. Russia has become not a part of the process of settlement, but a part of the problem. That is the situation today.

In the near future, we will invite delegations to watch a film — produced not by Moldovans, but by French journalists — about the armaments in Transdnistria, and representatives will have the opportunity to follow events by themselves.

The Chairperson: We have thus concluded the list of speakers on conventional weapons.

We will now proceed with the introduction of related draft resolutions and decisions.

Mr. Wensley (South Africa): I have the privilege to take the floor on behalf of the three coordinators of the annual so-called omnibus draft resolution — Colombia, Japan and South Africa — to introduce this year's draft resolution, entitled "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects".

Since my delegation did not deliver a prepared statement during the thematic debate on conventional weapons, given our understanding that this was intended not to be a repeat of the First Committee's general debate, allow me to elaborate on the intention behind the draft resolution.

At a time when we are encountering one setback after the other in achieving concrete progress in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, the challenge before us remains the continued commitment to strive for peace, stability and enduring security. Almost all delegations that mentioned the disappointment of the Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, during both the general and the thematic debates, emphasized that our failure to reach agreement on a draft outcome document in no way diminishes the continued relevance of the Programme of Action.

As such, the annual draft omnibus draft resolution maps out our priorities and continues to act as the vehicle for implementing or operationalizing the Programme of Action. The follow-up section of the Programme addresses two substantive elements — examining the feasibility of developing an instrument to identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons, as well as further steps to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit brokering.

As we are all aware, we now have that international tracing instrument and the onus is on us to take practical steps to implement that instrument.

The first of those, we believe, is to provide the Department for Disarmament Affairs with the name and contact details of the national point or points of contact, and of our national marking practices. It is for that reason that the draft resolution calls upon States to implement those first steps. The draft resolution also recalls the establishment of the group of governmental experts on illicit brokering that will soon commence its work.

Given the importance of section II of the Programme of Action in terms of preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade at the national, regional and global levels, as well as section III on international cooperation and assistance, the implementation of our 2001 undertakings in those areas is also highlighted.

In our statement in the First Committee's general debate, South Africa emphasized "the necessity to maintain the relevance of the consultative process on the implementation of the Programme of Action, in particular the agreed system of the biennial meetings of States" (*A/C.1/61/PV.4, p. 18*). Accordingly, the draft resolution calls for the next such meeting of States to consider our implementation of the Programme of Action to be held no later than 2008.

The text of the draft resolution has been issued as document A/C.1/61/L.15. It is our hope that it will attract a large number of sponsors and that it will again be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Shein (Myanmar): My delegation has the honour and privilege to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Nuclear disarmament", contained in document A/C.1/61/L.39.

We believe that nuclear disarmament should be accorded the highest priority on the international agenda of arms control and disarmament. Events and developments over the past few days reinforce that view. Given such developments around the world, it is now more urgent than ever to focus our attention and efforts on effectively meeting the challenge of nuclear weapons.

We strongly hold the view that the continued existence of nuclear weapons poses a grave threat to mankind. The only defence against a nuclear catastrophe is the total elimination of those weapons. We are firmly convinced that the goal of establishing a world free of nuclear weapons can be achieved through

concrete practical steps stemming from the genuine political will of all of us. That conviction is reflected in the preambular paragraphs of the draft resolution.

The draft resolution is comprehensive in scope and encompasses crucial interim steps for reducing the danger of nuclear weapons, which are reflected in operative paragraphs 4, 6 and 8.

The draft resolution enjoys the co-sponsorship of the countries of the Association of South-East Asian Nations and many countries of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). For the past several years, it has been adopted by the First Committee and subsequently by the General Assembly by a large majority of votes. My delegation sincerely hopes that the draft resolution will continue to enjoy the co-sponsorship of many NAM countries, as well as the support of a vast majority of Member States.

In conclusion, my delegation should like to seek the valuable support of Member States for the draft resolution, as in the past, and calls on them to vote in favour of it.

Mr. Duncan (United Kingdom): I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/61/L.55, entitled "Towards an arms trade treaty: establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms", on behalf of the seven original co-authors: Argentina, Australia, Costa Rica, Finland, Japan, Kenya and the United Kingdom. Let me say at the outset how much we have appreciated and value the support of the 91 Members of the United Nations that have so far agreed to sponsor the draft resolution.

The idea of an arms trade treaty is not new, but it may help friends and colleagues if I were to say a few words on what lies behind the decision of the seven co-authors to bring that proposal to the United Nations. I will also explain why the United Kingdom believes that the time has come for us all to engage in an informed discussion on whether and how to develop common international standards on the import, export and transfer of conventional arms. We, the co-authors, believe that such discussion can assist our collective efforts to promote peace, and security, and thus contribute to our endeavours to promote, as the United Nations Charter has it, social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

The moral case for an arms trade treaty is well known and has been made more eloquently than I could do here, most notably by Nobel Peace Prize laureates, civil society and, more recently, by spiritual leaders drawn from all the world's major faiths. We, the co-authors, share the concern about the human cost and on the wider detrimental effect of irresponsible arms transfers, for example on sustainable development.

All of us in this room, however, recognize that the threat to international peace and security posed by conventional weapons is not by their intrinsic nature. We also recognize the inherent and fundamental rights of States to provide for their defence and security. The first obligation of the nation State is to protect its citizens, and that is clearly set out in the United Nations Charter.

The United Kingdom is one of the world's major arms producers. The arms industry forms an important part of our economy and many thousands of ordinary people depend upon those companies for their employment. My colleagues would understand that the United Kingdom has come to its position of supporting the need for an arms trade treaty only after considerable thought and consultation.

The issues involved are indeed complex. While there is already a fair degree of commonality on the criteria and norms which arms manufacturing and exporting countries apply in their national controls, it will be a challenge to develop common international standards. But it is the firm view of the co-authors that we should begin that discussion and strive towards achieving that aim.

Moreover, we believe that it must be a discussion which involves both consumers and producers, and that the United Nations is the most suitable forum for the discussion. The alternative — simply increasing and widening cooperation among suppliers — would not, in our view, be appropriate. The co-authors are pleased to note that many of the emerging arms suppliers share this view regarding the need for a more comprehensive and inclusive approach and that they have indicated their support by volunteering to join in sponsoring the draft resolution.

Draft resolution A/C.1/61/L.55, which the co-authors submitted last week, followed extensive consultations with a wide number of United Nations Member States over many months. Our watchword

throughout has been transparency and inclusiveness. The co-authors, via the United Kingdom's overseas missions, sought views from almost all United Nations capitals on two separate occasions. In Geneva, an informal group drawn from a representative cross-section of regions helped the co-authors develop their ideas before the first draft text was put forward, on 24 July.

During the past two weeks in New York, the co-authors have held two open-ended meetings during which we listened carefully to the concerns of others. Following each meeting, we have attempted, without compromising our essential principles, to respond to those concerns in good faith, and have adjusted the language of the text. It is not our intention to use the draft resolution as an attempt to trap nations into agreement on an arms trade treaty. I would like to make clear again that our aim is to launch a discussion. The co-authors believe that the position of those who remain agnostic about an arms trade treaty is protected by the current text.

In conclusion, let me, on behalf of the co-authors, again express our thanks to the many States throughout the world that have joined us in sponsoring the draft resolution and have spoken up in support in the debates. They include traditional producers, emerging suppliers and consumers, thus reinforcing the view that the time has come to begin a serious, open and transparent discussion on the feasibility, scope and parameters of an arms trade treaty. Our sincere hope is that all colleagues will support this initiative.

The Chairperson: I call on the representative of Sweden to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/61/L.18.

Ms. Bonnier (Sweden): I am taking the floor to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/61/L.18, on the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW). I am doing so on behalf of almost 50 countries — and the number is still growing. My delegation is very grateful to all of the sponsoring States for their support, and I hope that even more will join us in the coming weeks.

The purpose of the CCW is to ban or restrict the use of specific types of weapons that cause excessive injury or unnecessary suffering to combatants or that affect civilians indiscriminately. This is as pertinent and pressing as ever. In only a few weeks' time, States

parties to the CCW will meet to review the scope, operation, status and implementation of the Convention and all of its Protocols. That forthcoming Third Review Conference will be a timely opportunity to take stock of important achievements over the past five years within the framework Convention. It will also coincide with a significant event: the entry into force, on 12 November, of the Convention's Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War.

But the Review Conference should also look forward. The Group of Governmental Experts has agreed on a number of important recommendations to the Review Conference, including a plan of action to promote the universality of the Convention and its Protocols. The issue of mines other than anti-personnel mines has been under serious consideration — I might even say negotiations — for several years. Work has continued on the implementation of existing principles of humanitarian law and possible further measures to prevent munitions from becoming explosive remnants of war. The need to promote compliance with the Convention has been recognized and is being addressed.

The draft resolution which I am introducing today is an expression of support for the CCW process. The specific substantive issues will, of course, have to be addressed by the States parties at the Review Conference.

Today, the CCW has 100 States parties. Let me take this opportunity to call upon all States that have not yet done so to become parties to the Convention and all of its Protocols, including the important amendment that extended the scope of the Convention to include situations of non-international conflict.

I am confident that the draft resolution will again receive the full support of the Committee and that, as with similar texts in previous years, it will be adopted without a vote.

The Chairperson: I call now on the representative of Germany to introduce draft resolutions A/C.1/61/L.26 and A/C.1/61/L.37.

Mr. Brasack (Germany): My delegation has the honour today to introduce two draft resolutions. I am introducing the first — draft resolution A/C.1/61/L.26, entitled "Problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus" — also on behalf of the delegation of France as co-initiator.

The draft resolution does not deal with a new issue. The sixth preambular paragraph recalls decision 59/515 of 3 December 2004 and resolution 60/74 of 8 December 2005, both of which were adopted by consensus. Resolution 60/74 decided to include the issue in the agenda of the current session.

Our intention is to give new but modest impetus to the recommendation in paragraph 27 of the so-called Thalmann report, document A/60/88, of 27 June 2005, that “the issue of small arms and light weapons ammunition be addressed in a comprehensive manner as part of a separate process conducted within the framework of the United Nations”.

Changes to last year’s resolution include moving the quote from the Thalmann consensus report from the preambular to the operative part of the present draft resolution and calling for the establishment of a group of governmental experts on the issue.

We express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on the topic (A/61/118 and Add.1) and to the States parties that have submitted reports containing information about their national practices and conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus. We are also grateful for the support that was voiced in the open-ended informal consultations on the issue held by the delegations of France and Germany on Friday, 13 October. It is our hope that the draft resolution will continue to enjoy consensus as did similar texts in 2004 and 2005.

Let me now come to the second draft resolution, which was initiated by Germany alone. On behalf of the sponsors, my delegation has the honour to introduce to the First Committee, as it has done in past sessions, a draft resolution entitled “Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures”, contained this year in document A/C.1/61/L.37.

We express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on this topic, which is contained in document A/61/288, as well as to the Member States which have sponsored similar draft resolutions in the past and those that are sponsoring this year’s text. Germany has submitted these draft resolutions biennially since 1996. They have enjoyed considerable support ever since, leading to adoption by consensus. In 2004 it had 123 sponsors, and was again adopted without a vote both in the First Committee and in the General Assembly, as resolution 59/82.

The concept of practical disarmament goes back to former Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali and his “*Agenda for Peace*” (A/47/277). Since then, it has been given increasing attention by the international community. Its basic idea is to focus the First Committee’s attention, in a more integrated manner, on the relevance of practical disarmament measures for the consolidation of peace in conflict and post-conflict environments. As experience has shown, measures such as the control of small arms and light weapons including their ammunition, demining, conversion and the demobilization and reintegration of former combatants are an integral part of effective conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation.

The draft resolution combines a comprehensive and integrated approach comprising a wide variety of aspects, from disarmament to peacekeeping matters, in an attempt to achieve tangible results within a foreseeable time frame. It is practical, operational and free of charge to the United Nations budget. The implementation of this operational resolution has in many cases led to results with direct impact on the lives of people in countries affected by conflict.

Following a wish expressed by the Secretary-General in his 1997 report on practical disarmament (A/52/289), a Group of Interested States on practical disarmament measures was established in March 1998, in an effort to strengthen international cooperation on the issues I have mentioned and to promote concrete projects in the area of practical disarmament, especially as proposed or undertaken by affected States themselves. The Group has been doing practical work by providing support and ensuring financing for numerous projects, including workshops, policy studies, turn-in programmes for small arms and light weapons held by civilian populations and control measures for those kinds of arms, to mention only a few. Beginning in 2005, the Group also invited the participation of representatives of major civil society and non-governmental organizations actively involved in the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

This year’s draft resolution is intended to maintain the momentum generated by its predecessors and to encourage the activities of the Group of Interested States. It is also aimed at keeping the Group operational and focusing it on matching demands by some Member States with the willingness of others to support projects proposed by them. In large part, it

follows the wording of the previous resolution. We have mainly updated the references to documents and meetings. We have also slightly changed the wording of paragraph 4, concerning the task description of the Group of Interested States, in order to focus more on its operational, as compared to its deliberative, character. In order to highlight the comprehensive approach of the draft resolution and for reasons of practicality on the ground, we have also made specific reference to the ammunition of small arms and light weapons, which should also be collected and destroyed, in response to requests by Member States in post-conflict situations.

With those explanatory remarks, I put this draft resolution A/C.1/61/L.37 before the members of the First Committee. Consultations with fellow sponsors and other delegations were conducted prior to the introduction of the draft resolution, in an effort to again secure consensus on the draft resolution. Those consultations took place on Thursday, 12 October.

My delegation is confident that, in keeping with tradition, the draft resolution will continue to receive the support of the large majority of Member States. More than 80 States have thus far signed on to the list of sponsors. We would like to invite all Member States to follow suit.

The Chairperson: I now give the floor to the representative of Mali, who will introduce draft resolution A/C.1/61/L.25.

Mr. Mallé (Mali) (*spoke in French*): I have taken the floor to express my delegation's views regarding the problem of small arms, as well as to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/61/L.25, on small arms, on behalf of the members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Allow me, at the outset, to convey to you, Madam, the warm congratulations of the delegation of Mali on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee; our congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau.

The effectiveness of the fight against the proliferation, circulation and trafficking in small arms and light weapons is in fact measured against the efforts taken at the national level. In that regard, Mali plays a crucial role in the fight against the proliferation of small arms. It was among the first countries to establish a national commission to combat the

proliferation of small arms — through its decree No. 87-304 P-RM, of 14 November 1996. The national commission, which is the national focal point for the 2001 Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, organizes annual awareness campaigns in the interior of the country concerning the problem of small arms, so as to involve people in the fight against this scourge. It also carries out training exercises for public officials and representatives of civil society. The Commission also includes decentralized local commissions at the level of administrative regions.

The national strategy to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons combines mandatory actions with awareness-raising campaigns. As part of their mandates, the customs service and the armed and security forces also contribute to efforts to combat the proliferation of small arms.

In order to demonstrate its political will and commitment to further combat the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons, Mali has destroyed a significant quantity of its stockpiled mines, retaining only a negligible quantity for the purposes of demonstration and military training exercises.

On the legislative front, law No. 49 P-RM of 27 September 2000, regarding the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, and its implementing decree No. 55-103 P-RM, of 15 November 2000, form the basis for the implementation of the Ottawa Convention.

With regard to small arms and light weapons, law No. 01-115, of 18 July 2001, relating to Mali's customs service, prohibits the import or export of goods that could pose a threat to public order, including weapons. In addition, Mali has adopted law No. 04-50, of 12 November 2004, which requires the registration of weapons and ammunition, in an effort to better adapt our legal framework to the country's current situation. The adoption of that law was based on the desire of the authorities to respond to the need to update national laws and harmonize them with those at the regional and subregional level, in line with the Programme of Action and the Bamako Declaration.

Civil society, which is also involved in the fight against the proliferation of small arms, has organized a

national arms control committee. In that regard, it is supporting the efforts of the Government by raising awareness about the proliferation of small arms.

Mali believes that in order to be effective all conventions aimed at regulating the international arms trade should take into account the following aspects: control over arms transfers overall, and in particular to armed non-State actors; control over possession by individuals; technical and financial support for national commissions; follow-up to the implementation of the measures recommended in the annual reports of national commissions; biennial meetings and review conferences; the record of violations of international humanitarian law and crimes against humanity; and arms brokering and tracing.

At the subregional level, the efforts made by ECOWAS in combating small arms and light weapons are known throughout the world. Among those efforts was the replacement of the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa by the Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials, which was adopted at Abuja, Nigeria, on 14 June 2006. The adoption of that legally binding Convention marks significant progress in the ECOWAS region and constitutes a decisive step in combating the proliferation of small arms. The delegation of Mali would like to take this opportunity to call for the assistance of the international community in implementing the Convention.

In addition to the Convention, I should also like to point to the establishment of the ECOWAS Small Arms Control Programme, which was launched at Bamako on 16 June 2006 and which replaced the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development. The new Programme, whose headquarters are in Bamako, aims at strengthening the capacity to control the circulation of small arms in the ECOWAS region.

On behalf of the States members of ECOWAS, the delegation of Mali would like to introduce, under sub-item (r) of agenda item 90, the draft resolution entitled "Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them" (A/C.1/61/L.25). Mali traditionally introduces draft resolutions on this subject on behalf of the States members of ECOWAS. This year there is no change

with regard to the substance of the text. We have merely updated the draft resolution in the light of the past year's major developments, specifically the replacement of the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa by the Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials. The new instrument illustrates the political will of ECOWAS States to intensify the fight against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons through the adoption of more binding measures.

The operative part of the draft resolution encourages the international community to support the implementation of the Convention, and the preambular part welcomes the launching of the Small Arms Control Programme. Those are some of the changes made to update the draft resolution.

Given the scope of the devastation caused by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, we invite all countries to become sponsors of the draft resolution. We also ask that it be adopted by consensus. We thank all the countries that have already become sponsors.

The Chairperson: I now give the floor to the representative of Sierra Leone to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/61/L.17.

Mr. Rowe (Sierra Leone): On behalf of Sierra Leone, I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/61/L.17, entitled "Declaration of the Fourth Disarmament Decade (2008-2018)", for the consideration of the First Committee under agenda item 90.

This is a new draft resolution only because it is not one of those that are considered annually, biennially or triennially. However, the idea, and the need to declare a disarmament decade, are not new. As we explained in our note verbale to all Member States on 6 October, the draft resolution is being presented against the background of the poor performance in the field of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation that we have witnessed in recent years. In the general debate both in the plenary meetings of the General Assembly and in this Committee, delegations, one after another, spoke of a protracted stalemate, heightened disappointment, impasse and a series of failures. As one delegation put it, the international community failed to make anything at all of recent

opportunities to make the world more secure through multilateral action on non-proliferation and disarmament. It was the representative of Norway who was more forthright when he said, "We shall have to change that" (A/C.1/61/PV.2, p. 5).

In his presentation to the First Committee on Monday, 16 October, Mr. Hans Blix, Chairman of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, summarized the report of that Commission in these words:

"Its central message is that the global process of arms control and disarmament, which has stagnated in the last decade, must be revived and pursued in parallel with the efforts to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction to further States and to terrorists." (A/C.1/61/PV.14, p. 1)

The draft resolution that has been circulated as document A/C.1/61/L.17 is also based on the Secretary-General's assessment that now is the time to bring back disarmament into the limelight of the international agenda, and on his call for a more concerted international effort to build a common understanding of the most immediate nuclear threats, in order to avoid a cascade of nuclear proliferation. The draft resolution would have the General Assembly recognize the urgent need to mobilize concerted and more intensive global efforts to reverse the current trend and underline the significant role that the fourth disarmament decade could play in that regard.

I should like to reiterate that the draft resolution is not controversial. It is not prescriptive as to the programme of activities and priorities of the proposed decade. It is essentially a recommendation to commence a process. As clearly stated in paragraph 1, the draft resolution would have the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States and appropriate international bodies, as well as non-governmental and civil society organizations, concerning the proposed decade. On the basis of those views and the experience of the previous Decades — in particular the Second Decade — the Secretary-General would also be requested to prepare an outline, in the form of a draft working paper, for the first two years of the proposed decade.

Of course, there are precedents for that approach and for the language of the operative paragraphs of the draft resolution. It will be recalled that the elements of the declaration of the 1980s as the Second

Disarmament Decade were prepared by the Disarmament Commission on the basis of a preliminary outline provided by the Secretariat.

Regarding the time frame of the proposed decade, it appears that 2010 would be the logical commencement date of the decade. However, the delegation of Sierra Leone strongly believes that, in view of the state of the international security environment, and taking into account the experience of previous Decades, the proposed Fourth Decade should commence as soon as possible. We cannot afford to spend three long years making preparations for it. As I said, we have precedents for that. We can go back and look at the previous Decades and see what we can learn from the programmes that were adopted by the General Assembly in pursuit of the objectives of those Decades.

The draft resolution is open for further sponsorship. My delegation trusts that it will receive the support of the entire membership of the First Committee, and subsequently that of the General Assembly.

The Chairperson: As no other delegation wishes to introduce draft resolutions pertaining to conventional weapons issues, I propose that we now invite today's guest speakers to make their statements.

As previously mentioned, we have as panellists the Chairperson of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, the President of the Conference on Disarmament, the Chairperson of the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research.

I will now suspend the meeting in order to continue our discussion in an informal setting.

The meeting was suspended at 11 a.m. and resumed at 12.25 p.m.

Organization of work

The Chairperson: It now seems likely that we will have to use the time slot allocated to us on Friday, 20 October, and I would kindly ask representatives to plan their activities accordingly. We will use that meeting to catch up with whatever thematic statements and introductions of draft resolutions that remain after tomorrow's meeting. I will also provide members with guidance as to our work and procedures for next week.

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

Mr. Sareva (Secretary of the First Committee): First, I would like to remind representatives of the invitation to a lunch-time panel presentation on the theme “Linking development and small arms: policy development, field programming and research”, to be held today, 18 October, from 1.15 p.m. to 2.45 p.m. in Conference Room A. The panel has been organized by the Permanent Mission of Switzerland and the Quaker United Nations Office.

The Chairperson: Before I adjourn the meeting, our colleague from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has requested me to convey to the Committee his appreciation for the Committee’s cooperation in adjusting this morning’s meeting so that the FAO could prepare for the World Food Day event that will take place in this room at 1.15. He would also like me to inform all delegations that the one-hour World Food Day event will be followed by a luncheon, compliments of FAO, in the cafeteria on the ground floor of the Secretariat building. All are invited.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.