Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Delegates,

I wish to speak in relation to draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.35 on “United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific”. As you know, the Permanent Representative of Nepal addressed a letter to the Secretary-General, dated 22 August 2002, on the issue of the relocation of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific and asked that the letter be circulated as a document of this, the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Nepal, the Hon. Mr. Arjun Jung Bahadur Sing, also referred to this matter in a statement to the Assembly on 19th September 2002, as did the Permanent Representative of Nepal in the General Debate of the First Committee on 4th October 2002. It is obvious, therefore, that this is a matter of deep concern to Nepal. The United Nations, and I believe, the Member States also, feel a similar commitment to finding a solution to this long-standing problem. This is one of the reasons why I felt compelled to address this Committee on the issue.
In a letter dated 27 September 2002, the Secretary-General has replied to the Government of Nepal, drawing attention to the position of the United Nations, as set out in his report to the General Assembly (A/57/260), and reaffirming his willingness to reach mutual accord on the Host Country Agreement and on the Memorandum of Understanding.

My Department would like an early implementation of the Secretary-General’s stated readiness to find a swift solution and has sought to address the issue with a view to reaching an agreement that would conform to the rules and regulations of the United Nations as well as to international norms.

It should be noted that agreements inevitably vary from country to country, since they reflect the conditions existing in the particular country. The agreements proposed to Nepal for the Asia and Pacific Regional Centre were prepared in close consultation between the Department for Disarmament Affairs, the Office of Legal Affairs (OLA), the Controller’s Office and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Kathmandu, just like any other Host Country Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding prepared by the United Nations, and reflect United Nations policies which prevail at the time.

Another aspect that the United Nations is required to consider very seriously in order to proceed with the relocation of the Centre is the question of
security – the security of its Staff and the security of its premises. Security, as all will appreciate, is increasingly a matter of paramount importance, just as it is right here at New York Headquarters. These agreements must contain precise security requirements that cannot be ignored or negotiated. They incur costs which the United Nations has no mandate to bear by itself.

With regard to the need for a new Host Country Agreement and a Memorandum of Understanding, there were several concerns that had to be dealt with. The previous agreements had been signed in 1988 and were considered outdated and insufficient for the present time. The world has changed dramatically since 1988 and these agreements had to reflect the new political and practical realities, including current costs. Therefore new agreements were prepared which set forth, among other things, the details of the requirements for the effective relocation of the Centre, as well as the contribution to be made by the host government. Similar revisions have had to be made in respect of the Lima and Lome Centres.

I would like to stress that these new provisions are needed to avoid any future financial difficulties that would impede the work of the Regional Centre and were drafted in accordance with operative paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 55/34H, which indicates that the Government of Nepal would “bear the operational costs of the Centre for it to function from Kathmandu”.
The Secretariat has already agreed to Nepal’s request that the sum of US$63,000, which represents the accumulation of its voluntary contributions up to 1997, be set aside for the purpose of the initial establishment of the Regional Centre and for equipment and other facilities that would be required by the Centre.

In his response to the Nepalese Government’s letter, the Secretary-General noted that the Secretariat was awaiting a favourable reply with regard to the proposed Host Country Agreement, presented to Nepal on 6 December 2001, and the MOU, given to Nepal informally on 12 April and presented formally on 16 May 2002. He expressed the hope that an early and positive response would be forthcoming. The Department for Disarmament Affairs is determined to reach agreement with the Government of Nepal on any outstanding issues as soon as possible and welcomes the support of the members of this Committee to facilitate the effective operation of the Regional Centre.

I would like to close my remarks by reiterating the readiness of the United Nations and the Department for Disarmament Affairs to cooperate with the Government of Nepal and the Member States to seek feasible and satisfying solutions to the relocation of the Regional Centre. In this regard, I would suggest that the Member States consider the possibility of supporting the relocation and operation of the Centre through direct contributions, or ensuring the financial
stability of the Centre. Any other solution, which may be useful to overcome the present situation and enable the effective operation of the Regional Centre, will be welcomed.

On this issue, we are united in the quest for a solution. I am convinced that a cooperative attitude among all Member States, the Government of Nepal and the Secretariat is the right means to bring this quest to an end.