Madam Chairperson,

In my capacity as the Chairman of the Consultative Mechanism for the re-organization of the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, I wish to report to the First Committee on the progress the Mechanism has made so far in its work. The Consultative Mechanism was established by the General Assembly in resolution 60/86 of 8 December 2005 for the re-organization of the Regional Centre.

Allow me to start with a brief mention of the mandate of the Regional Centre.

Madam Chairperson,

The Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa was established on 1 January 1986 on the basis of the General Assembly resolution 40/151 G of 16 December 1985 to provide, upon request, substantive support for initiatives and other efforts of Member States of the African region towards the realization of measures of peace, arms limitation and disarmament in the region, in cooperation with the African Union, as well as co-ordinate the implementation of regional activities in Africa under the World Disarmament Campaign.

The Consultative Mechanism held three meetings between May and June this year on the basis of proposals submitted by the Chairman. It was generally agreed that Africa has faced greater challenges of peace, arms limitation and disarmament since the establishment of the Centre; and that the Centre is not properly equipped, either in terms of its mandate or resources, to address these challenges.

There was also a general agreement among participating States that the numerous changes or developments in the areas of peace and disarmament that had occurred in Africa, or at the level of the United Nations, since the establishment of the Regional Centre to which the Centre has failed to respond adequately. Infact, the Centre appears to have been overtaken by these developments, when it should be playing coordinating roles in some of them. Notable examples of those developments are the establishment of the African Union with new structures and institutions such as its Peace and Security Council; the emerging role of sub-regional organizations in Africa such as ECOWAS, SADC, Nairobi Declaration, in conflict resolution and the adoption in 2001 of the UN Programme of Action on illicit Trade in SALW. The Treaty of Pelindaba on the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone is another new phenomenon that emerged since the establishment of the Centre. The Treaty has not entered into force ten years after it was signed. It is almost imperative that the Centre should not only play a role in promoting its entry into force but also in its full implementation. Members of the Mechanism were particularly concerned over the inability of the Centre to be proactive in promoting the
implementation of UNPoA in Africa considering that Africa remains the region most affected by illicit small arms trade.

There was also a general feeling that the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa should be involved in promoting the implementation in Africa of all international instruments and resolutions in the field of peace, disarmament and security adopted under the UN framework. The Centre should, for example, be involved in ensuring the implementation in Africa of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) on preventing access to non-State actors of weapons of mass destruction as well as in promoting in Africa the implementation or ratification, as may be applicable, of the NPT, CWC, BWC, CTBT, and so on. The Centre should establish a link, either directly or through the DDA, with the implementation or monitoring regimes of these instruments where they exist.

Similarly, there was a general view that the Centre should be involved in implementing or at least monitoring the implementation of UN resolutions on preventing the dumping of nuclear or radioactive wastes in Africa, an issue that is of critical importance to Africa. The need for the Centre to be involved in preventing access to non-State actors of Man-portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS) was underscored. The issues of nuclear or radioactive waste dumping and MANPADS were seen as particularly important in view of Africa's experience as a fertile ground for illicit activities in these areas by persons or groups based outside Africa. The Ottawa Convention on landmines is another instrument whose implementation the Centre should be deeply interested.

The need was emphasized for the Centre to be meaningfully involved in the activities of the newly-established Peace-building Commission (PBC) particularly in its implementation of DDR programmes in Africa.

Madam Chairperson,

The foregoing considerations formed the basis of the Chair's proposals which were aimed at re-directing the Centre focus on areas of priority interest to Africa. The Consultative Mechanism also considered a set of proposals, to be incorporated in Chair’s text, containing a programme of work for the Centre over a period of time based also on issues of priority interest to Africa. Suggestions were made to the effect that the work of the Mechanism should include a review of the Centre's mandate as a means of strengthening its activities. Some members were of the view that the current mandate was still valid and did not require a review.

As noted in the resolution setting up the Mechanism, the Regional Centre has been operating under strenuous financial difficulties resulting from substantial reduction in inflow of funds from donors. While acknowledging its
financial difficulties, a large majority of members expressed the view that the financial situation could be due to the inability of the Centre to adequately address itself to the increasing challenges of peace and disarmament in Africa. This situation, in their view, might have been responsible for lack of interest in voluntary contributions to the Centre. Consequently, they expressed the strong belief that effective programmes by the Centre could attract the necessary funding. A view was expressed that African States should significantly increase their financial contributions to the Centre to reduce dependence on external funding which currently account for most of financial needs.

A suggestion was made to establish two additional posts for the Centre to be funded from regular budget, and to allocate from regular budget an annual subvention to cover the difference between the contribution of the host country and the actual operating cost of the Centre. At the request of the proponent of this proposal, it was agreed that the proposal would be reflected in the Secretary-General’s report.

Madam Chairperson,

All the issues before the Consultative Mechanism are still under discussion as it could not complete its work before the June deadline for the preparation Secretary-General’s report. The Mechanism will, therefore, require more time to enable it complete its work and come up with a comprehensive package of reform proposals for the consideration of the First Committee and the General Assembly at the 62nd Session.

I thank you.