Statement by H.E. Mr. Bernhard Brasack
Permanent Representative of Germany to the Conference on Disarmament
Head of the Delegation of Germany to the First Committee
on Agenda Item 90 (e): Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures
at the First Committee of the 61st Session of the General Assembly
New York, 17 October 2006

Madam Chair,

My delegation has the honour to introduce, on behalf of the co-sponsors, the draft resolution entitled “Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures” to the First Committee, as it has done in past sessions.

We express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his Report on this topic, as contained in document A/61/288, as well as to Member States that have co-sponsored this resolution in the past and to those who are doing so this year. Germany has submitted this resolution biannually since 1996. It has been enjoying considerable support ever since, leading to its adoption by consensus. In 2004 it had 123 co-sponsors and was, again, adopted without vote both in the First Committee and in the General Assembly.

The concept of “Practical Disarmament” goes back to former Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali in his “Agenda for Peace”. It has since then 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 like control of small arms and light weapons including their ammunition, demining and conversion, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, are an integral part of effective conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation.
The resolution combines a comprehensive and integrated approach, comprising a wide variety of aspects from disarmament to peace-keeping matters with an attempt to get tangible results within a foreseeable time-frame. It is practical, operational and free of charge for the UN budget.

The implementation of this operational resolution has lead in many cases to results with a direct impact on the lives of people in countries affected by conflicts. Following a wish expressed by the Secretary-General in his 1997 report on Practical Disarmament, a “Group of Interested States in Practical Disarmament Measures” was established in March 1998 in an effort to strengthen international cooperation in the above-mentioned issues and to promote concrete projects of practical disarmament, especially as proposed or undertaken by affected states themselves.

The group has been doing practical work by providing support and assuring financing to numerous projects such as workshops, policy studies, “turn-in” programmes of small arms and light weapons held by the civilian population, and control measures for this kind of arms, to mention only a few. Beginning in 2005, the group also invited 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 is intended to keep the momentum created 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. It follows in large part the wording of the previous resolution. We have mainly updated the references to documents and meetings.

We have slightly changed the wording in op. 4, concerning the task description of the Group of Interested States in order to give more focus to its operational as compared to its deliberative character. In order to highlight the comprehensive approach of the 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 these explanatory remarks I put this draft resolution before you. Consultations with co-sponsors, but also with other delegations, have been conducted prior to the tabling of the draft in an effort to again secure consensus on this resolution. In keeping with this tradition my delegation is confident, that this draft resolution will continue to receive the support of a large majority of Member States. 72 have so far signed the co-sponsoring-list and we would like to invite all other Member States to follow.

Thank you, Madam Chair.