Madam Chairperson,

I have the honour, on behalf of the co-sponsoring States, to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/61/L.24 entitled, ‘United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa’.

The draft resolution was submitted in recognition of the important role that Regional Centre can play in promoting peace, security and arms control and disarmament at the regional level, thereby enhancing progress in the area of sustainable development. Regrettably, the Centre has been carrying out its mandate under very strenuous financial and operational difficulties, as was noted by the Secretary-General in his Report. The activities and staffing of the Regional Centre have been reduced in view of the limited resources at its disposal.

The problems of the Regional Centre were mostly clearly described a few days ago by the Under-Secretary-General for DDA, Mr. Nobuaki Tanaka and the Chief of Regional Disarmament Branch, Madam Agnes Marcaillou. It was evident from their presentations that the Centre faces two major challenges: lack of reliable source of funding that would ensure the sustainability of its operations and the need to re-organize it and possibly review its mandate in the light of developments in the field of peace and security in Africa since its establishment.

The most worrisome development regarding the Centre is the report by the Secretary-General that its future looks bleak due to lack of reliable source of funding that would ensure the sustainability of its operations. Unfortunately, efforts undertaken to mobilize the necessary resources for the operational costs of the Centre yielded very little dividends when compared to its needs. While remaining grateful to the few countries that have made financial contributions to the Centre, there is still urgent need for more financial contributions from the donor community to enable the Centre deal with the increasing challenges of peace, security and disarmament in Africa.

In addition to the need to re-organize the Centre, there also is need to establish close cooperation between it and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, in particular its institutions in the field of peace, disarmament and security, as well as with relevant United Nations bodies and programmes in, and for, Africa, for greater effectiveness.

The consultative mechanism of interested States established last year by the General Assembly for the re-organization of the Regional Centre, has not completed its work and would require more time. There is a lot of work before this body. In addition to identifying areas for close cooperation between the Regional Centre and Peace and Security Council of the African Union as well as with relevant United Nations bodies and programmes in, and for, Africa, the
consultative mechanism is also expected to examine ways and means of establishing cooperative arrangement between the Centre and these bodies or institutions, and improving any existing ones. It is also expected to consider the perennial problem of funding for the Centre. In general, the consultative mechanism is expected to consider all necessary factors that will enable the Centre respond adequately to Africa’s needs in the areas of peace, security and disarmament. It may also consider the need for the Centre to be proactive in promoting or initiating preventive measures against armed conflict, where possible. In view of the need for more time, the draft resolution requests the Consultative Mechanism to continue its work with a view to identifying concrete measures to revitalize the Centre. We believe that the consultative mechanism will represent a major step towards enhancing the effectiveness of the Regional Centre as well as in attracting requisite funding for its operational activities.

The draft resolution urges all States, as well as international governmental and non-governmental organizations and foundations, to make voluntary contributions in order to strengthen the programmes and activities of the Regional Centre and facilitate their implementation.

It appeals to the Regional Centre, in cooperation with the African Union, regional and sub-regional organizations and the African States, to take steps to promote the consistent implementation of the 2001 UN Programme of Action against illicit small arms trade.

The draft resolution, which is submitted annually, had always been adopted by consensus both at the First Committee and the General Assembly. It is our wish that the draft resolution be similarly adopted at this session.

I thank you, Madam Chairperson.