First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly
Sixty-fourth Session
21 October 2009

Statement by Ms Agnès Marcaillou
Chief, Regional Disarmament Branch
Office for Disarmament Affairs

"Regional Disarmament and Security: MAKING A DIFFERENCE"

Check against delivery
Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

I would like to thank you again for giving me the opportunity to provide the Committee with an update on ODA’s regional work.

I am pleased that the Directors of the three Regional Centres are with us today; they will each brief you on their respective Centres’ current and future work priorities, and during what we hope to be an interactive session, they will give you “live” the picture that you have already read in the SG’s reports on the Centers’ activities.

Experience demonstrates that disarmament initiatives at the global and regional levels are mutually reinforcing. To be effective, global norms and instruments must be implemented at regional, sub-regional and national levels. At the same time, efforts at the sub-regional and regional levels can build momentum to disarmament initiatives at the global level. This framework shapes our work and activities.

I would like to borrow from what some delegates have stated during this session of the 1st Committee: a lot has been done to implement the global disarmament and non-proliferation agenda, and “there is much work to do to ensure that the UN agenda has a real effect on the ground”.

Making a difference on the ground is, in a nutshell, what you have entrusted the operational branch of ODA to do. My colleagues will share the specifics of what we have been working on.

1st Committee after 1st Committee, I have informed you of the progress made, step by step, in the revitalization and effective operation of the Centers. As you all know, the 5 of us here in the NY office of RDB oversee the activities of its three Regional Centres, and continue to promote more coherence as we coordinate the execution of RDB’s programs, and ODA’s overall action on the ground. We ensure that programs are tailored to the specific situation of each region and sub-region whilst aligning them with ODA’s priorities. The programs we execute are driven by the UN agenda; they respond to member states’ requests, and continue to be subject to donors’ support.

Before tackling specific aspects of our field projects, I should like to mention briefly the positive developments recorded by the UN Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, a very important diplomatic process providing 11 countries of central Africa with space for discussion, negotiation and mediation, therefore building confidence amongst member states through dialogue and making this UN conflict prevention tool progressively more relevant.

Our action at ground level is also driven by the impact our programs have on the people we ultimately serve. Whether we draft a Code of Conduct for Armed and Security Forces in Central Africa, undertake Peace and Disarmament education programs for youth leaders, or
train, hands-on, law enforcement officials in Latin America and the Caribbean, we always put at the heart of our programs the vital role that women play in peace and security, the critical importance of mainstreaming gender; and the overall respect of international standards of human rights.

Today, we may acknowledge that the Regional Disarmament Branch was taken of the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) last year, and that the patient is now stabilized. We are not in a position to declare “full recovery” yet, but we have clear signs that the “treatment/protocols” which we applied are being effective. Overall, this year, emphasis has been shifted from ‘survival’ to ‘sustainability and impact” of RDB’s action.

We have come to the conclusion that maximizing our impact relies upon building upon our strengths, forging stronger partnerships and moving gradually from projects to strategic programs.

This year, the expressions “Lessons learnt”, “Comparative advantage” and “Added-value on the ground” have become my Branch’s mantra.

(a) Based on the above, RDB’s activities have focused on:
   1. Promoting and supporting the implementation of the UN agenda through “outreach and advocacy”
   2. Capacity building measures including the development of tools and development of stronger frameworks;
   3. Training the Trainers for law enforcement officials; (a hands-on training combining theory and practice)
   4. Support for comprehensive legislative and policy development;
   5. Enhancing our capacity to support regional partners efforts, and also national efforts upon request;

(b) Stronger partnerships continue to be developed and forged with departments and agencies of the UN system; with regional and sub-regional arrangements, and also with civil society.

Stakeholders are increasingly eager to partner with RDB because we have attained levels of visibility, credibility and reliability which mitigate risks for them.

Comparative advantage, added-value on the ground has become the mantra in my branch. We continue to proudly carry the RDB flag of “being the sole regional entity of the UN mandated to implement your decisions and recommendations”; today, this flag has earned increased respect because we are receptive to member states’ needs and demands; because we are executing projects efficiently; because we have good track records; because the beneficiaries of our programs give positive feedback; because donors and partners are increasingly interested in making use of this UN regional infrastructure established by the GA.
In other words, evidence shows that we are making a difference on the ground; and all of you working with us know that our commitment to increase our impact, and make the world safer does not waver.

Finally, I should like to take this opportunity to put on record our sincere appreciation for the political, financial and in-kind support you have extended to RDB and its three Regional Centres.

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,
I would like now to invite my colleagues to share with you the sounds and sights of the world.