Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Cuban delegation, I congratulate you and the rest of the Bureau on your election to lead the work of this Committee.

We fully support the statements by Indonesia in this debate on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and Chile on behalf of the Rio Group.

Mr. Chairman,

While millions of people suffer the effects of the worst economic and financial crisis since the Great Depression and four fifths of humankind live in underdevelopment and poverty, world military expenditures increase at an accelerated rate.

In the last ten years, said expenditures have increased by 50 per cent, amounting, at present, to 1,531 billion dollars, which is many times higher than that of the international development assistance.

It is unjustifiable and unacceptable that, in the world today, ever more money is spent in means to wage wars and less in promoting life and development.

The High-level Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals, held few days ago, made clear that most of the countries will not be able to achieve those modest goals. They simply do not have the necessary resources to make it.

With the resources devoted to armaments today, among other things, the 1,020 million hungry people in the world could be fed; proper housing could be guaranteed to over 640 million children not having where to live; and the 17 thousand children, who die every day out of hunger, at a rate of 1 in 5 seconds, could be fed.

Cuba reiterates its proposal to allocate at least half of the current military expenditures to meet the need for economic and social development, through an UN-managed fund.
Mr. Chairman,

The mere existence of nuclear weapons and doctrines that prescribe their possession and use, pose a grave danger to international peace and security.

There are nearly 23 thousand nuclear weapons in the world; 7,560 of them are ready for immediate use and more powerful than those which sowed terror and death in the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The prohibition and complete elimination of nuclear weapons is and must remain the top priority in the field of disarmament.

The outcome of the 2010 NPT Review Conference constitutes a step forward. Also, it cannot lead to pleasure and satisfaction, since they are far from what the present moment requires.

The Review Conference made very clear there is still a great distance between the rhetoric and good intentions reiterated by some nuclear-weapon States and the commitments and steps they are really willing to take.

Some of the highly relevant proposals promoted by non-aligned countries, particularly regarding the Action Plan on Nuclear Disarmament, were reflected in the Final Document of the Review Conference only as vague and weak aspirations, or were simply disregarded.

We made every possible effort for the Action Plan to include a calendar with well-defined actions, and for 2025 to be set as the deadline to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Regrettably, the strong opposition of some nuclear-weapon States prevented an agreement thereupon.

The modest progress made in the Review Conference must be an incentive to continue working for nuclear disarmament and the full implementation of all NPT provisions. Nuclear disarmament cannot remain a constantly postponed and conditioned goal.

Mr. Chairman,

Every year, the UN General Assembly recognizes the important role of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral negotiation body in the field of disarmament.

It is regrettable that that body continues to fail to carry out substantive work. However, the solution does not lie in disregarding the Conference or minimizing its importance. On the contrary, today more than ever, it is the duty of all of us to preserve and strengthen it.

We reiterate the call to flexibility based on the respect for the rules of procedure so that the Conference adopts, as soon as possible, a comprehensive and balanced programme of work taking into account the real priorities on disarmament.
Cuba stresses its commitment to the strict implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention. The total destruction of chemical arsenals is the most important task of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. This Organization has also a significant role to play in promoting the economic and technological development of States Parties, particularly the least developed ones.

We reiterate the only way to reinforce and improve the Biological Weapons Convention is through the negotiation and adoption of a legally-binding Protocol filling the gaps of that instrument.

Mr. Chairman,

Cuba fully supports and implements, in all its aspects, the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. We likewise firmly defend the legitimate right of States to manufacture, import and keep small arms and light weapons to respond their legitimate security and defense needs.

From that perspective, our country participated in the Fourth Biennial to review the execution of this Programme of Action, held last June. Assistance and international cooperation must be promoted as essential elements so that all States advance in the fulfillment of the Programme of Action.

In the context of the work of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty, Cuba emphasizes the need for this process to be carried out in the framework of the United Nations, in a balanced, gradual, transparent, and inclusive manner, on the basis of consensus.

There cannot be room for rushed or forced decisions. The question of the transfer of conventional weapons is complex. It has important political, economic, legal, and security-related implications for all States and, therefore, does not accept preconceived and simplistic formulae. The opinion of all States must be duly taken into consideration.

Allow me to conclude, Mr. Chairman, by reiterating the full support of the Cuban delegation to your work and the success of the work of this Committee.

Thank you