Thank you, Mr Chairman.

Your high personal standing in the disarmament community, and Indonesia’s staunch support for UNIDIR for many years, make me particularly glad to see you in the chair.

Your Excellencies, Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As many of you know, the creation of UNIDIR was first proposed by French President Giscard d’Estaing during the first Special Session devoted to Disarmament, SSOD1. The General Assembly approved that proposal in its 33rd Session in 1978, and UNIDIR was established as an autonomous research institute in 1980 under a General Assembly mandate.

SSOD1 put in place the pieces of the UN Disarmament Machinery as we know it, and that Machinery is the reason I am speaking here today along with my colleagues, Amb. Hoffmann, president of the Conference on Disarmament; Amb. Roman-Morey, chair of the UN Disarmament Commission; and the Chairman of UNIDIR’s Board of Trustees and the Secretary-General’s Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, Amb. Palihakkara.

As many of you are aware, there is a proposal under development in the Secretariat that directly addresses the future of disarmament research at the United Nations. As Mr. Kim Won-soo, Special Advisor to the Secretary-General on Change Management, will brief us all on this proposal on Nov. 1, I will focus my presentation on UNIDIR’s current operations.

UNIDIR has an autonomous role within the UN to promote informed participation in negotiations and other disarmament efforts to ensure greater security at a progressively lower level of arms, particularly nuclear arms.

In August, the Secretary-General identified a number of specific actions through which states and civil society might break what he described as the “disarmament stalemate”. UNIDIR’s programme of work is dedicated to doing exactly that.

UNIDIR has a long history of work towards nuclear disarmament and recently has begun research on the consequences for humanity of any detonation, accidental or not, of a nuclear weapon. This work reflects the deep concern of the States Parties to the NPT about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons.

In addition, since I contributed to this discussion a year ago, the Institute has placed understandable focus on implementation of the NPT Action Plan; nuclear transparency,
accountability and security; and de-alerting.

UNIDIR was established in Geneva, in part, to be of service to Members of the Conference on Disarmament. Over the years, the Institute has provided technical expertise when the CD has been actively negotiating—but has also consistently provided support and analysis to break the current deadlock.

As noted in the report of the Conference on Disarmament, UNIDIR was called upon by the CD’s Presidents to prepare information materials as background for this year’s discussions on all agenda items. Those debates took place under the Schedule of Activities agreed by the Conference, and were used by the Presidents when introducing the debates on the core issues and on the revitalization of the CD. A publication containing these backgrounders has been distributed to all First Committee delegations.

The Secretary-General, his Special Representative to the Conference on Disarmament, and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs have all urged the CD forward, offering practical advice for possible ways to advance. Meanwhile, UNIDIR also has been working to provide ideas for progress in the CD, both from structural and substantive viewpoints. UNIDIR has consistently served as a venue for discussing how to move forward the CD’s substantive agenda, and the Institute looks forward to supporting future negotiations within the CD.

In promoting informed participation in negotiations, the Institute in recent years has been strongly associated with the Arms Trade Treaty, especially through seven regional seminars over and above the numerous briefings in New York and Geneva. I am very grateful to the hosts of these meetings—Nepal, Morocco, Uruguay, Indonesia, Kenya, Lebanon and Serbia—and to the European Union, which funded the project. I am confident that, despite July’s outcome, this work has not been in vain.

UNIDIR’s research programme on emerging threats, specifically regarding space and cyber security, continues to grow. And, of course, UNIDIR continues to help Member States battle the scourge of small arms and light weapons with work designed to strengthen the implementation of the Programme of Action and to support the use of the International Small Arms Control Standards. In addition, UNIDIR has for the past year undertaken efforts to promote norms on the use of explosive weapons, and to develop methodologies for evidence-based programme design for use by UN agencies.

As many of you know, UNIDIR’s activities are completely funded by voluntary contributions. I first must express deep gratitude to all Member States that have demonstrated both publicly and privately their support for the Institute. We are all aware of the financial constraints resulting from the global recession, and the budgetary and organizational pressures that absorb so much time and energy, yours and mine, and from which none of us is immune or insensitive.

Indeed, as long ago as 2007, the UN Joint Inspection Unit cited concerns about the reliance of many UN organizations on extra-budgetary, non-core funding for building programmes of work. Key issues cited by that study included the lack of predictability of voluntary funding and the impact on sustainability, the narrow donor base across all organizations, that earmarked funds can lead to a distortion of programme priorities, critical shortages of core resources negatively affecting the ability to support programming, and the administrative burdens associated with non-core, extra-budgetary funds.
UNIDIR, unfortunately, is increasingly beset by all those problems.

For the past several years, UNIDIR’s small subvention from the regular budget has covered only one staff member, and despite many resolutions by Member States and recommendations of the Board that this be increased, the situation has not changed.

So we are deeply grateful to those governments that provide voluntary contributions, and those that sponsor various research projects. Indeed, total contributions for projects have been on a steady upward trend for nearly a decade, which reflects the value to Member States of our activities.

At the same time, non-earmarked funding for the Institute has been going in the opposite direction. Many of you have heard me express regret at our lack of capacity to carry out rapid-reaction research and information activities on request: there is simply no pool of funds to draw on or to retain permanent staff to cover such circumstances. We have no standing research staff; our researchers are engaged only for the duration of their projects. More information on UNIDIR’s current staffing and funding mechanisms has been distributed along with my statement.

Unfortunately, we lost our Deputy Director and a part-time editor this year due to a lack of core funding. This is an increasingly untenable situation—projects and activities cannot be supported nor outputs disseminated without institutional staff.

Furthermore, the Institute struggles mightily to fully address its mandate under circumstances in which most funding is earmarked for specific projects and is provided by only a dozen or so donors. Lack of core and programme resources and a narrow donor base inevitably means that UNIDIR is hard pressed to address all issues dear to Member States.

We are working hard to find ways to resolve these issues, including exploring public–private partnerships. But ultimately, proper resourcing—whether from the regular budget or from voluntary funds—comes down to Member State support. So let me conclude by thanking Member States, especially our donors, for their support for the Institute these past 12 months. Finally, I would also like to place on record a personal tribute to the work of the Secretary-General’s Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters and UNIDIR’s Board of Trustees for their engaged efforts to support UNIDIR and myself.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.