Mr. Chairman,

I join others in congratulating you and the Bureau of the First Committee on your election, and extend my delegation’s wishes for a fruitful and successful session under your able leadership. You can be assured of our full cooperation and support.

Mr. Chairman,

We are now in a new and complex security environment brought about by the emergence of new threats, weapons of mass destruction and international terrorism. While the world and the international community are deeply concerned and public cry is loudest, no immediate solutions seem to be in sight. The consolation, however, is the increasing international recognition and support for the broad objectives of disarmament, both for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and regulation of conventional weapons.

As we approach the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations, the importance of maintaining the credibility and integrity of the UN as the most effective multilateral venue for addressing issues of security and international peace is crucial. However, and sad to say, less progress has been achieved lately, both within the UN machinery, and the international peace and security framework. Member states continue to be divided on crucial disarmament and security issues and cooperation has been hard to achieve. In this regard, Fiji supports efforts to review and reform workings of the First Committee, in the context of the UN reform and revitalization programme, to, inter alia, ensure the strengthening of multilateralism and international cooperation in this area. We subscribe to the belief that multilateralism is a core principle in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation and that effective progress can only
be achieved when legitimate concerns of member states are carefully considered and addressed, and universal norms adopted. The continued involvement of the Security Council in addressing these threats is also important.

Mr. Chairman,

As a small island developing state and a strong advocate for international peacekeeping, Fiji is committed to the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda and relies on the multilateral form of this Committee to play a critical role in addressing the current challenges and ensuring further progress in this area. Our efforts, we hope, will assist in the realization of a peaceful and safe nuclear-free world.

As an active member of the Pacific Islands Forum, Fiji has been active on the regional front in ensuring a collective regional approach to the issue. The Forum has been consistently expressing its stand on issues such as: weapon control legislations, shipment of radioactive materials, and Nuclear Free-Zones. On weapons control legislations, the region is undertaking work on the drafting of a legislation to ensure public safety by imposing strict control on the importation, possession and the use of fire arms, ammunition, and other related material. The shipment of radioactive materials through the region has been a long standing issue and the region reiterates its concerns about possible economic loss in non-release situation and is seeking further assurance from parties concerned. It also welcomes the recent assurance by shipping states to take all practicable actions to assist in dealing with accidents if it occurs in our waters. With respect to the South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone treaty, we continue to call on those that have yet to ratify the Protocols to the Treaty to do so as a means of enhancing global and regional peace, security and global nuclear non-proliferation.

On small arms and light weapons, Fiji and the region have been steadfast in their resolve to strengthen arms control and usage. Fiji played host to a UN regional small arms and light weapons workshop in Nadi in August this year. The workshop was sponsored by Australia and Japan with the assistance of the UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament. We hope that a lot of useful lessons would have been learned from the workshop to assist and guide national plans and strategies.
Mr. Chairman,

Leaders of our region continue to remind the international community of the plight of islands in the region of the radioactive contamination which had been a result of nuclear weapons test conducted in the region. We hope that those responsible will live up to their obligations and support efforts to rehabilitate and transform the life of people affected by their actions in these islands.

Mr. Chairman,

Fiji continues to be concerned with the surge in weapons and military expenditures, which inevitably impacts greatly on commitments to social and economic development. Health, education, poverty eradication, and achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will continue to be affected. We believe that disarmament and development must compliment one another and the international community must continue to retain the development agenda on top of its priority list as a means to ensure the enhancement of international security and long-term stability.

Mr. Chairman,

We are increasingly aware of the threat of weapons of mass destruction getting to the hands of terrorists. It is critical that member states and the international community must cooperate in efforts to ensure that strict controls are in place to alleviate this threat. In response to the Security Council Resolution 1540 of 2004, Pacific Island leaders have moved to ensure that all countries in the region have legislative provisions to address terrorism, transnational organized crimes, weapons control and transport security. There are also moves to conduct a regional counter-terrorism contingency planning exercise.

Mr. Chairman,

We firmly believe that there are sufficient goodwill and cooperation present among member states and the United Nations to bring about progress in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. While the challenges will continue to confront us, effective strategies based on international cooperation and multilateralism will ensure great success.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.