STATEMENT BY GUATEMALA

I wish, first of all, to congratulate you on your election to chair the First Committee at the current session of the General Assembly. My congratulation extends, of course, to your colleagues on the bureau.

We thank the delegate of Brazil for the detailed statement he made on behalf of the Rio Group. We associate ourselves with it, but would like to add some observations of our own on certain of the items that we consider to be of particular importance, including some general comments on the overall situation existing with respect to disarmament and international security. In so doing we shall, however, refrain from addressing items whose priority nature is known to us all. We shall also leave all the matters on which work still remains to be done.

The First Committee once again meets in an atmosphere of uncertainty in the sphere of international security. We have been shocked by a series of acts of terrorism perpetrated in different parts of the world. The wave of terrorist acts has not only marked a new era in the area of international security, introducing a new dimension with regard to disarmament, non-proliferation and the control of arms. It has also raised new challenges in the work of the First Committee, as well as in the functioning of the international machinery dealing with disarmament as a whole. We are now, more than ever before, convinced that the fight against terrorism requires actions at the level of each of our countries, complemented by actions undertaken within the multilateral framework, in which both regional and global bodies have a fundamental role to play.

Thus, the resolutions that have been adopted in the framework of this body and the legal instruments that have been adopted within the United Nations now represent, more than ever before, the means by which States may, collectively, effectively address this new international reality. This means that we must not only preserve all that we have accomplished in the area of disarmament, but also duly appreciate and reinforce those successes by means of universal participation and application.

We are aware of the momentum that the efforts being made towards revitalization attained during our last session, as well as of the practical measures that have been taken as regards the methods of work and begun to be generated by that momentum. We re thus studying the various proposals that have been put forward in order to improve the functioning of the First Committee in particular and we welcome the gradual implementation of such changes as may have been agreed to. We believe however that the nature of the First Committee should not be changed, inasmuch as it is the most representative international body for dealing with disarmament and security questions. What can be done in regard to this Committee is to strengthen it.
Accordingly, regard being had to the benefits that accrue from collective action, we should concentrate on breathing new life into our resolutions and seek to ensure that they are fulfilled. This could be done by complementing novel follow-up mechanisms able to muster the political will necessary for their fulfillment. Every change we are willing to make in this Committee will have a repercussion on the other two essential elements of multilateral disarmament, namely the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission. This is why the interdependence that exists in the disarmament area between the problems relating to disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation makes it necessary for our field of action to be based on the preponderant role of the United Nations.

Before concluding I would like to refer briefly to two punctual issues that are of particular importance to our delegation. We reaffirm, first, our commitment to the fulfillment of the Action Plan adopted by the Conference on illicit on small and light weapons, as well as the Ottawa Convention on antipersonnel mines. We thus continue to move ahead in the implementation of the corresponding programs at the national level and welcome both the holding of the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, to be held next week in Nairobi, and the second biennial meeting for the implementation of the Action Plan to be held in July 2005 in New York.

Second, we wish to emphasize the importance of our recently created national disarmament commission, whose main objective will be to implement the national program for disarmament, coordinating actions taken by the various actors in order to diminish indexes of armed violence, the availability of arms and munitions and the raising of public awareness regarding the effects or weapons. A fundamental function of the commission will be to become the national organ responsible for ensuring compliance with the relevant rules, carrying out investigations and supervising initiatives for combating the illicit traffic. It also aims to be the international point of contact for disarmament issues.

This session marks the beginning of a busy year in the area of disarmament disarmament. The open-ended working group charged with negotiating an international instrument allowing States to identify and track down small arms and light weapons, as well as the biennial meeting for implementing the action plan, provide an opportunity for finding new ways of countering illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons. Furthermore the next NPT review conference provides an opportunity to reiterate our determination to prevent the use and proliferation of nuclear weapons, with an unequivocal commitment to eliminate them. The latter is more necessary than ever inasmuch as the issue of terrorism is at the top of the global security agenda and there exists, possibly more than ever before, the possibility that nuclear weapons may fall into the hands of terrorists. Let us not let this opportunity slip by to send a clear and principled message affirming our commitment to progress in the areas of disarmament and international security.