Mr Chairman,

As part of the effort to use our thematic debate to foster an exchange of views on specific issues of significance for the disarmament and security field, I wish to speak to the topic of verification and compliance. This is a crucial underpinning of international non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament accords. In order to persuade states to freely accept certain constraints on their behaviour as part of an international accord, it has long been recognised that one must be able to assure them that others are also abiding by the obligations set out in the mutual agreement.

A good encapsulation of this concept, as well as the interrelationship between verification and compliance, was set out in principle #11 of the Sixteen Verification Principles, which reads: “Adequate and effective verification arrangements must be capable of providing, in a timely fashion, clear and convincing evidence of compliance or non-compliance. Continued confirmation of compliance is an essential ingredient to building and maintaining confidence among the parties.”

Developing the right verification approach to a given non-proliferation, arms control or disarmament challenge is not a simple task; nor is there a universal template that can be applied. Solutions will differ according to the specific case. In our view, however, one constant in the realm of multilateral agreements is an objective process that provides states parties with the information necessary to make substantiated judgments regarding compliance by other states parties. Ideally, such a verification capacity should be linked to a process for resolving disputes about compliance and taking remedial action to correct non-compliance.

Verification is a dynamic field, where practical experience, technology and diplomatic instruments are changing and developing. Think of the impressive capacities of the International Monitoring System of the CTBTO or the expanded coverage of IAEA inspections under the Additional Protocol. We consider this to be a field where increased exchange of information, dedicated research and development programs and creative institutional thinking should be pursued for the benefit of the international community. We would also like to see this Committee and the UN as a whole pay more attention to the issues of verification and compliance as one way of promoting synergies among the multilateral non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament regimes.

Experts groups established by this Committee contributed a decade or more ago to the study of verification and its implications for the UN. More recently, the Disarmament Advisory Board offered up views and recommendations relevant to this field. We believe the further consideration of this topic in the UN context is warranted with a view to identifying future contributions or capabilities that would be complementary to current arrangements. Hence our proposal for
soliciting member states views in 2005 as input to a panel of government experts to be established
in 2006 to examine the issue of verification in all its aspects, including the role of the UN, a
proposal designed to advance collective thinking on this subject.

Nationally, the Department of Foreign Affairs is reviving research activity in the field of
verification and compliance and has recently undertaken a “scoping study” that compiled views
from a wide range of experts regarding existing problems and possible solutions. At the political
level, the Canadian Prime Minister has spoken to the General Assembly about the role verification
can play in strengthening our multilateral systems and about the need to deal effectively with cases
of non-compliance. Given that compliance concerns, if left unaddressed, can undermine
international peace and security, we all have a stake in doing what is within our means and mandate
to contribute to the effectiveness of verification and compliance under the international accords that
concern us.

In the opinion of my delegation, it would be useful to include the topic of verification and
compliance as a distinct part of our thematic debate timetable. Currently, we are obliged to raise it
under the clusters of confidence-building and/or disarmament machinery to which it definitely
relates, but it really merits a sub-item of its own.

Thank you