We welcome today’s discussion on disarmament machinery, which is connected to the recent process of revitalizing and improving the effectiveness of the working methods of the First Committee. Our first concern should therefore be to ensure compliance with the consensual resolution 59-95 of last year, the ink on which is still fresh, and the implementation of it. We commend you, Mr. Chairman, for your efforts to ensure respect of that resolution, and for the discipline which you are maintaining in our proceedings.

Italy, as a member of the European Union and as its President two years ago, when the revitalization process was initiated, recalls the role played by the E.U. and notes that many E.U. proposals are reflected in resolution 59-95. We believe that at this stage the First Committee is the main functioning multilateral forum on disarmament and non-proliferation. Safeguarding and strengthening this body is, therefore, of paramount importance.

The discussion on the Disarmament Machinery, however, exceeds the scope of improving the effectiveness of the First Committee. It is a broader and more complex issue. Is there a need to review the existing machinery? We did not receive any specific mandate on this issue from our leaders at the 2005 World Summit. The outcome document contains several recommendations to overhaul existing U.N. structures: for instance, the establishment of a Human Rights Council and of a Peace-building
Commission. But there are no recommendations on the disarmament machinery. As a matter of fact, there are no indications whatsoever on WWD disarmament and non-proliferation.

We are among those who believe that the stalemate in which we find ourselves is a symptom of a political divergence on our main priorities. A multilateral compromise at this stage requires further efforts aiming at harmonizing these priorities.

I refer in particular to the Conference on Disarmament. We believe that the task of finding an agreement on a programme of work in the CD belongs to the Members of the Conference of Disarmament themselves and that progress depends on the political will of Member countries. The G8 leaders' call last July to resume substantive work at the CD, was a political message at the highest level. The importance of the Conference on Disarmament was also reaffirmed in last year's final document of the XIV Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement. Both these statements are meaningful expressions of a political will, and we should build upon them. One of the best ways to foster a more focused political will is to encourage the involvement in the CD at the political level.

We are not ignoring other calls and suggestions made at the Conference on Disarmament, in the First Committee as well as within the NPT Review process to change or adjust the existing machinery. Nor have the more drastic calls for the suspension of some of our activities gone unheard. Although we understand the spirit that animates some of these proposals, we must address them with caution. We must avoid a situation in which the negotiating stalemate provokes a paralysis also in our deliberations and our dialogue. We cannot run the risk of losing the expertise and the relationships which have been established over many years.

Should the stalemate be prolonged, we do not exclude the option of reviewing the functioning of the existing machinery. However, this process should not be improvised and should follow the appropriate institutional procedures.