STATEMENT

BY

MR. CHUKA UDEDEBIA
MINISTER
PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UN, NEW YORK

ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP

ON THE

INTRODUCTION OF THE DRAFT RESOLUTION ON THE UNITED NATIONS REGIONAL CENTRE FOR PEACE AND DISARMAMENT IN AFRICA

AT THE

FIRST COMMITTEE OF THE 60TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, 25 OCTOBER 2005
Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour, on behalf of the African Group, to introduce draft A/C.7/60/L.41 entitled, 'United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa'.

The draft resolution was submitted in recognition of the important role that Regional Centre can play in promoting peace, security and arms control and disarmament at the regional level, thereby enhancing progress in the area of sustainable development. Regrettably, the Centre has been carrying out its mandate under very strenuous financial and operational difficulties, as was noted by the Secretary-General in his Report. The activities and staffing of the Regional Centre have been reduced in view of the limited resources at its disposal.

The problems of the Regional Centre were mostly clearly described last week by the Under-Secretary-General for DDA, Mr. Nobayasu Abe and the Chief of Regional Disarmament Branch, Madam Agnes Marcaillou. It was evident from their presentations that the Centre desperately needs funding.

The most worrisome development regarding the Centre is the report by the Secretary-General that its future looks bleak due to lack of reliable source of funding that would ensure the sustainability of its operations. Unfortunately, efforts undertaken to mobilize the necessary resources for the operational costs of the Centre yielded very little dividends when compared to its needs. While remaining grateful to the few countries that have made financial contributions to the Centre, there is still urgent need for more financial contributions from the donor community to enable the Centre deal with the increasing challenges of peace, security and disarmament in Africa.

There is also the need to review the mandate and programmes of the Regional Centre in the light of developments in the field of peace and security in Africa since its establishment. Furthermore, there is need to establish close cooperation between the Regional Centre and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, in particular its Institutions in the field of peace, disarmament and security, as well as with relevant United Nations bodies and programmes in, and for, Africa, for greater effectiveness.

In consideration of the multifarious problems besetting the Regional Centre, the draft resolution requests the Secretary-General to establish, within existing resources, a consultative mechanism of interested States, in particular Africa States, for the re-organisation of the Regional Centre, and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. Part of the responsibility of the consultative mechanism would be to review the mandate and programmes of the Centre in the light of developments in the field of peace and security in Africa since its establishment. This body is also expected to identify areas for
close cooperation between the Regional Centre and Peace and Security Council of the African Union as well as with relevant United Nations bodies and programmes in, and for, Africa. The consultative mechanism should examine ways and means of establishing cooperative arrangement between the Centre and these bodies or institutions, and improving any existing ones. It is also expected to consider the perennial problem of funding for the Centre. In general, the consultative mechanism should consider all necessary factors that will enable the Centre respond adequately to Africa’s needs in the areas of peace, security and disarmament in Africa. It may also consider the need for the Centre to be proactive in promoting or initiating preventive measures against armed conflict, where possible.

It is envisaged that the views of the consultative mechanism on all these issues will form part of the Secretary-General’s report requested for in operative paragraph 6 of the draft resolution. The African Group believes that the consultative mechanism will represent a major step towards enhancing the effectiveness of the Regional Centre as well as in attracting requisite funding for its operational activities.

The draft resolution appeals to all States, as well as to international governmental and non-governmental organizations and foundations, to make voluntary contributions in order to strengthen the programmes and activities of the Regional Centre and facilitate their implementation.

It appeals to the Regional Centre, in cooperation with the African Union, regional and sub-regional organizations and the African States, to take steps to promote the consistent implementation of the 2001 UN Programme of Action against illicit small arms trade.

The draft resolution, which is submitted annually by the African Group, had always been adopted by consensus both at the First Committee and the General Assembly. It is the wish of the African Group that the draft resolution be similarly adopted at this session.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.