Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Cuban delegation, I congratulate you and the rest of the Bureau on your election to lead the work of this Committee.

We fully support the statements made by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and by Chile on behalf of the Rio Group.

Mr. Chairman,

Over the past years, we have witnessed the aggravating consequences of the deep economic and financial crisis faced by the world. However, the global military expenditures do not cease to grow. In the last ten years, they have increased by 49%, amounting to the astronomical figure of 1.5 trillion dollars.

Such situation is simply unjustifiable and unacceptable, particularly taking into account that only one country holds over half of the global military expenditures, and that just 10% of the funds currently allocated to the war industry would be enough to achieve the Millennium Development Goals; which would contribute to fighting extreme poverty suffered by 1.4 billion people in the planet, feeding more than 1 billion hungry people, or preventing the death of 11 million children who die every year on account of hunger and preventable diseases.

Therefore, Cuba reiterates its proposal that at least half of current military expenditures be devoted to meeting economic and social development needs through an UN-managed fund.

In the last year, many squares in various regions of the world have witnessed people’s protests and demands of all kinds, some genuine and others manipulated by the mass media. It is striking to see how, in some of these cases, some governments disregard the demands of their citizens and reinterpret the exercise of democracy, and their duty to ensure the fundamental rights enshrined in international instruments.

It is also outrageous to see how, under the pretext of civilian protection, the NATO carries out genocide in Libya, thus failing to comply with arms control measures and by using highly lethal sophisticated weapons.
Mr. Chairman,

The first resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, adopted on 24 January 1946, called for, and I quote "... the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction" end of quote. Regrettably, 65 years after such demand, nuclear disarmament remains a pending and urgent task.

International peace and security continue to be threatened by the existence of over 23,000 nuclear warheads, half of which are ready for immediate use. The use of only a small part of this arsenal is enough to cause the nuclear winter, and thus the end of the human race.

It is unacceptable that "nuclear deterrence" continues to be the basis of military doctrines prescribing the possession and use of nuclear arsenals.

The only guarantee for nuclear weapons not to be used by States or anyone else is their elimination and total prohibition, which should also include similarly lethal advanced conventional weapons, under a strict international control.

Political manipulation of non-proliferation, based on double standards and political interests, on the existence of a privileged few who continue improving their nuclear weapons while trying to violate the inalienable right of the countries of the South to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, must come to an end.

The entry into force of an agreement among the major nuclear powers, aimed at reducing their offensive strategic nuclear weapons is a positive but insufficient sign.

Nuclear weapons have failed to meet their commitment under Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), to negotiating an international treaty to eliminate nuclear weapons.

Concrete steps must be promoted to fully eliminate nuclear weapons in a binding, non-discriminatory, transparent, verifiable, and irreversible manner.

The modest measures contained in the Plan of Action adopted during the 8th NPT Review Conference must be fully implemented.

It is a matter of priority to commence international negotiations to conclude a treaty providing universal and unconditional security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States, against the use or threat of use of said weapons.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is a necessary and important contribution to the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. We support the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East without delay.
The Non-Aligned Movement submitted a proposal that deserves to be addressed and contains a Plan of Action establishing a well-defined schedule for the gradual reduction of nuclear weapons until their total elimination and prohibition by no later than 2025.

In the framework of the 50th anniversary of the Non-Aligned Movement, a “Statement on the total elimination of nuclear weapons” was adopted, which reafirms nuclear disarmament as the highest priority of the Movement in the field of disarmament, and declares its firm commitment to work for convening a high-level international conference to identify ways and means of eliminating nuclear weapons at the earliest possible date.

Mr. Chairman,

Within the disarmament machinery, the Conference on Disarmament plays a crucial role, as the only multilateral forum for the negotiation of disarmament treaties. If the Conference did not exist, it would have to be created without delay.

We regret the Conference has been unable to carry out substantive work for over a decade. Some insist that the causes lie in its working methods and rules of procedure. Cuba does not share such interpretation. What happens in the heart of the Conference does not constitute an isolated situation within the disarmament machinery.

It is no coincidence that the UN Disarmament Commission concluded its work this year, for the twelfth consecutive time, without adopting substantive recommendations. In addition, every year the General Assembly First Committee adopts dozens of resolutions, particularly on nuclear disarmament, that are simply not implemented.

Cuba supports the efforts to optimize the UN disarmament machinery, including the Conference on Disarmament, but is also convinced that the paralysis currently affecting most of the disarmament machinery is caused first and foremost by the lack of political will by some States to achieve actual progress, particularly on disarmament.

The First Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament established the disarmament machinery of the United Nations system, and in it each body plays an essential role. Therefore, we uphold that the nature and functions of each body must be preserved.

If the disarmament machinery of the United Nations system needs to be revitalized, let us then welcome the Fourth Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament, instead of hindering this process.
Mr. Chairman,

We are concerned about the insinuations by some delegations that the time has come to set aside the Conference on Disarmament and turn to alternative negotiation processes.

Cuba opposes the replacement of the Conference with improvised, selective ad hoc arrangements outside the framework of the United Nations. If such criteria are imposed, we would be taking a dangerous step backwards. The solution does not lie in beginning to disregard the Conference on Disarmament or minimizing its importance. On the contrary, today more than ever, its preservation and strengthening is the responsibility of us all.

The Conference on Disarmament must adopt, as soon as possible, a comprehensive and balanced programme of work that takes actual disarmament priorities into account. The Conference must urgently commence negotiations on a convention banning the development, production, stockpiling, and use of nuclear weapons, establishing their destruction, and leading to the non-discriminatory and verifiable global elimination of nuclear weapons, according to a well-defined schedule.

While the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty for the manufacture of nuclear weapons would be a positive action, it is still insufficient in itself if subsequent steps to achieve nuclear disarmament are not defined.

As Cuba advocated during its concluded Chairmanship of the Conference on Disarmament, that body is ready to negotiate simultaneously a treaty that eliminates and prohibits nuclear weapons; a treaty that bans the arms race in outer space; a treaty that provides effective security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States, like Cuba; and a treaty that prohibits the production of fissile material for the manufacture of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

Mr. Chairman,

Cuba stresses its commitment to the strict implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention.

The total destruction of chemical arsenals is the most important task of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). This Organization also plays a significant role in promoting the economic and technological development of States Parties, particularly that of the less developed, and has a long road ahead in this regard. Less than a year before the extended deadline for the destruction of all chemical weapons, the OPCW is facing growing challenges that shall be addressed, in a timely manner, by its member States with a view to building the necessary consensus so as to preserve the integrity and credibility of this important Convention and of the Organization.
Cuba reiterates that the only way to strengthen and improve the Biological Weapons Convention is by means of negotiating and adopting a legally-binding Protocol that closes off the loopholes this instrument still has.

Mr. Chairman,

Cuba fully supports and implements the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, in All Its Aspects. Likewise we firmly uphold the legitimate right of States to manufacture, import, and possess small arms and light weapons to meet their need for security and self-defense.

In that context, our country has engaged in the work of the Preparatory Committee of the United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty. In that regard, we emphasize the need for this process to be carried out in a balanced, gradual, transparent and inclusive manner, as well as on the basis of consensus.

The question of the transfer of conventional weapons is complex and has important political, economic, legal and security implications for all States, and therefore does not accept preconceived, discriminatory or selective formulae, or hasty or forced decisions.

This instrument should contain general rules for all countries to import, export and transfer conventional weapons in an organized manner and without affecting their national security interests. The proposals on the elements for a future Treaty must be attainable and universally accepted goals, which do not deflect us from our objective of strengthening the mechanisms to prevent and combat the illicit arms trade. The views of all States must be duly taken into consideration in this process.

Allow to conclude, Mr. Chairman, by renewing to you the full support of the Cuban delegation for you work and the success of the Committee’s work.

Thank you