Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to begin by extending my congratulations to you on your election to preside over this important Committee and to commend you for the professional manner in which you are conducting our proceedings.

Malta is pleased to participate once again in this important discussion on "Regional Disarmament and Security". As in previous years, our intervention will, for the most part, focus on the efforts undertaken by Malta and by others in the region to strengthen security and cooperation in the Mediterranean.

As a European country at the cultural crossroads of the Mediterranean, it is only natural that Euro-Mediterranean affairs are a leading and essential part of Malta’s foreign policy. Malta’s geo-strategic location makes it particularly conscious of the intrinsic relationship between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean. Malta is an active member in all regional fora concerning the Mediterranean and its major strategic objective is to continue to play a proactive role in the promotion of peace, stability and prosperity in the region - in the process also reinforcing ties between both sides of the Mediterranean.

Mr. Chairman,

The transformative changes sweeping across the Mediterranean are far-reaching and will have profound consequences not only for the countries themselves but for the entire region. Through an impressive manifestation of determination and courage the peoples of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya have forged a new path for themselves and their countries. Over the past twelve months all three countries have further consolidated the processes of democratic transition.
During the struggle in Libya Malta played a prominent role in helping to meet the humanitarian challenges arising out of the evacuation of refugees, the treatment of the wounded and the provision of critical medical supplies. The United Nations has played a constructive role in the June elections in Libya. The successful and timely holding of this election, in the face of understandable difficulties, provided a striking expression of the democratic aspirations that first inspired the revolution. Malta stands ready to continue its intensive cooperation with Libya bilaterally, at the regional level in the context of cooperation being extended by the European Union, and through the United Nations.

One area of cooperation is that of border control. The European Union has developed considerable expertise in this field and is working closely with Libya in this area. Over the last decade Malta has received a disproportionate influx of asylum seekers and illegal migrants in respect of the country’s geographic and demographic situation. While Malta reaffirms its commitment to abide by its international obligations, we reiterate our call to the international community to continue to assist Malta in the resettlement process and to address the issue of illegal migration in a more holistic manner.

Malta has always striven to promote the widest possible dialogue and cooperation among the countries of the Mediterranean. It has sought to act as a bridge between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean. Malta was pleased to host the first Ministerial meeting between the EU and the Arab League and is convinced that the second Ministerial to be held in Cairo next month will consolidate and build on the achievements of the Malta meeting.

In the same spirit Malta was particularly pleased to host earlier this month the Second Summit of the Western Mediterranean Forum, also known as the 5+5. Significantly it was the first Summit since the beginning of the Arab Spring and provided a useful opportunity for a closer regional focus on developments in North Africa. The meeting brought together the Heads of State or Government of Algeria, France, Italy, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia and Malta. The European Commission, the Arab Maghreb Union, the Union for the Mediterranean, the League of Arab States and the Parliamentary Assembly for the Mediterranean participated as active observers.

The Summit adopted a wide ranging Declaration which addressed regional security & stability, economic & social issues, education & youth and migration & development. The Declaration welcomed the process of democratic transformation that has been initiated in the region. It condemned and called for an immediate end to all violence in Syria and urged the Syrian Government to take appropriate measures to ensure the safety of civilians and allow immediate and unrestricted humanitarian access. The Declaration also expressed continuing concern with the situation in Mali. It made a call for progress on the Palestinian question through the resumption of negotiations on all final status issues that are conducive to a two State solution. The ten leaders also agreed to engage more actively in addressing challenges that could destabilize the region such as terrorism, transnational organized crime and illicit arms trafficking.

Mr. Chairman,

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) is another process which continues to generate the much needed political dialogue that has a direct bearing on strengthening security and
co-operation in the Mediterranean. In this context, Malta supports efforts by the UfM in its focus on the implementation of feasible projects which will achieve concrete results in the broader context of North-South co-ownership of the UfM. Synergies are being created between the Union for the Mediterranean and the 5+5 Dialogue especially in the area of project proposals such as with the Trans Maghreb Motorway project which has been entrusted to the Secretariat in Barcelona for its implementation.

Mr. Chairman

Malta actively supports the role of parliamentarians in advancing the aspirations of the people of the Mediterranean. In this respect, Malta is honoured to host the Headquarters of the Parliamentary Assembly for the Mediterranean (PAM), which brings together Members of Parliaments from all countries bordering the Mediterranean on an equal footing in a unique forum of their own, to examine questions and take decisions on issues of direct interest to the countries of the region. The Seventh Plenary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean recently held in Malta on the 12th-13th October discussed current issues and how to continue working on initiatives that promote democracy and socio-economic progress. Malta congratulates Italian Senator Francesco Amoruso on his election as PAM President for 2013-2014.

Mr. Chairman,

By once again co-sponsoring the draft resolution on “Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean” and urging all Member States to approve this resolution without a vote, Malta wants to reiterate its conviction that security in the Mediterranean is closely linked to European security as well as to international peace and security. My Delegation would like to express its appreciation to the Delegation of Algeria for drafting this resolution and hopes that its provisions will be implemented in full. Together with other UN Member States, especially those of the Mediterranean littoral, Malta is determined to continue to build on past achievements by striving to enhance dialogue among countries in the Mediterranean region. It will also continue to participate actively in efforts by all stakeholders to strengthen the various Mediterranean and Euro-Mediterranean inter-governmental and parliamentary fora.