"Like preceding speakers, I thank you for your delegation's welcome initiative to include the item which brings us here today in the Council's agenda: the problem of the massive illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons.

Today, the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons is a real threat to international peace and security. The Secretary-General has quite rightly focused the international community's awareness on this phenomenon and the dangers it represents to the stability of developing countries, particularly in Africa.

The information we have been receiving from the United Nations and from other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations shows that this is the type of weapon most often used in the many conflicts that various parts of the world are currently experiencing.

The use of weapons seems to be motivated by how easy they are to use and how cheap they are. In addition, they are easy to conceal and therefore elude the notice of the customs and security services responsible for controlling our various borders.

When we think of the incalculable number of civilian victims that these weapons claim - including women, children and the elderly - we realize the urgency of adopting or strengthening measures, on the national,
regional and international levels, enabling us to regulate the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

It is clear that without close cooperation between the countries that produce these weapons and those that buy and use them, all the efforts that our respective Governments and the United Nations are making to stem the illicit traffic in this category of weapons will not produce the desired results.

Governments in most African regions have taken measures to combat illicit transfers of weapons of all sorts. Following the United Nations example, they have created a subregional register to ensure transparency in terms of the weapons they have available for legitimate defence purposes in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. Others, such as the States members of the Economic Community of West African States, have adopted moratoriums on small arms and light weapons.

As one can see, Africa is determined to make its contribution to combating illicit traffickers in small arms and light weapons. It expects that the rest of the international community will show the same determination.

For its part, the Security Council must see to the full implementation of its resolution 1209 (1998) of 19 November 1998. Amongst other things, the resolution urges Member States with relevant expertise to cooperate with African States to strengthen their capacity to combat illicit arms flows, including through the tracking and interdiction of illicit arms transfers; requests the Secretary-General to consider practical ways to work with African States in implementing national, regional or subregional programmes for voluntary weapons collection, disposal and destruction, including the possibility of the establishment of a fund to support such programmes; and encourages the Secretary-General to promote cooperation among Member States, the United Nations,
regional and subregional organizations and other relevant organizations to collect, review and share information on combating illicit arms flows, especially regarding small arms, and to make available, as appropriate, information about the nature and general scope of the international illicit arms trade with and in Africa.

I should like to associate myself with those delegations that have never ceased to suggest that specific provisions should be included in the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping and peace-building operations regarding not only the disarmament of former combatants but also the collection and destruction of their weapons, and control over the illicit traffic in arms.

I should like to appeal to all the States Members of our world organization to take part en masse in both the preparatory work for the conference, and in the conference itself on all aspects of the illicit traffic in arms which the General Assembly has decided to convene in 2001 at the latest."