

Achieving peace and security

Introduction

62. During the 1990s, we have witnessed major changes in the patterns of global conflict and in the international community's responses to them. Today, more than 90 per cent of armed conflicts take place within, rather than between, States. With relatively few inter-State wars, traditional rationales for intervention have become decreasingly relevant, while humanitarian and human rights principles have increasingly been invoked to justify the use of force in internal wars, not always with the authorization of the Security Council. Sanctions have been used far more frequently in the 1990s than ever before, but with results that are ambiguous at best.

63. One of the more encouraging developments of the last decade has been an increase in the number of conflicts settled by negotiation. Three times as many peace agreements were signed in the 1990s as in the previous three decades, reflecting a more than 30 per cent decline in the overall number and intensity of armed conflicts around the world from 1992 to 1997. With the sharp upturn in the number of wars in 1998, however, it seems doubtful that the positive trend of the previous five years will be sustained.

64. Comprehensive peace agreements have led to complex implementation processes involving many different agencies. While some traditional peacekeeping operations remain, peacekeepers throughout this decade have been involved in the broader post-conflict peace-building

processes associated with the implementation of peace agreements. Post-conflict peace-building involves the return and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons, reconciliation, rebuilding judicial systems, strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights, electoral assistance and assistance in rebuilding war-torn political, economic and social infrastructures, as well as more traditional peacekeeping tasks.

65. In response to the changing international normative climate, the number of legal instruments, particularly relating to humanitarian and human rights law, has increased considerably. Growing public concern about gross human rights violations provided much of the political impetus for the creation of the International Criminal Court; concern about the humanitarian costs of landmines fuelled the successful campaign to ban them.

66. The past decade has also been a period of tension and difficulty for the United Nations as it has sought to fulfil its collective security mandate. Earlier this year, the Security Council was precluded from intervening in the Kosovo crisis by profound disagreements between Council members over whether such an intervention was legitimate. Differences within the Council reflected the lack of consensus in the wider international community. Defenders of traditional interpretations of international law stressed the inviolability of State sovereignty; others stressed the moral imperative to act forcefully in the face of gross violations of human rights. The moral rights and wrongs of this complex and contentious issue will be the subject of debate for years to come, but what is clear is that enforcement actions without Security Council authorization threaten the very core of the international security system founded on the Charter of the United Nations. Only the Charter provides a universally accepted legal basis for the use of force.

67. Disagreements about sovereignty are not the only impediments to Security Council action in the face of complex humanitarian emergencies. Confronted by gross violations of human rights in Rwanda and elsewhere, the failure to intervene was driven more by the reluctance of Member States to pay the human and other costs of intervention, and by doubts that the use of force would be successful, than by concerns about sovereignty.

Preventive diplomacy and peacemaking

68. Early warning is now universally agreed to be a necessary condition for effective preventive diplomacy. It is not, unfortunately, a sufficient condition, as the tragedy in Kosovo has demonstrated. As the crisis unfolded, I twice addressed the Security Council in the hope that consensus could be achieved for effective preventive action. Regrettably, diplomatic efforts failed, and the destructive logic of developments on the ground prevailed.

69. What lessons should be drawn from this and other recent failures in conflict prevention? First, that if the primacy of the Security Council with respect to the maintenance of international peace and security is rejected, the very foundations of international law as represented by the Charter will be brought into question. No other universally accepted legal basis for constraining wanton acts of violence exists. Second, that conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacemaking must not become an area of competition between the United Nations and regional organizations. We work together best when we respect each other's prerogatives and sensitivities. Third, that prevention can only succeed with strong political commitment from Member States and if the provision of resources is adequate.

70. Healing the wounds of a war-torn society is never an easy task. It presents a particularly difficult challenge in Kosovo, which remains embedded in the complicated and contentious political fabric of the Balkans. We recognize the real potential for further disruption of the fragile ethnic equilibrium in a number of the surrounding countries.

71. While the crisis in Kosovo has dominated global media headlines during the past year, equally or more serious crises in other parts of the world have been largely ignored. If this neglect were restricted to the media it would not be of great consequence, but media inattention reflects the attitude of much of the international community, as has become evident in the decline in support for humanitarian appeals for Africa.

72. Security developments in Africa continue to cause the gravest concern. In West and Central Africa in particular, the threat that internal conflicts will spread and lead to armed confrontations between sovereign African States is an especially worrying development.

73. This risk is perhaps best illustrated by the ongoing hostilities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in which a large number of African countries have become involved. My Special Envoy, Moustapha Niasse, whom I dispatched to the region in the spring, has been working in support of the diplomatic solution put forward by President Frederick Chiluba, on behalf of the Southern African Development Community. President Chiluba's efforts have the support of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations.

74. The prospects for peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have improved. On 10 July, all the belligerents except the *Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie* signed a ceasefire agreement in Lusaka. The Se-

curity Council welcomed the agreement and authorized the deployment of United Nations military and civilian personnel in the region to facilitate the implementation of the ceasefire. After concerted efforts by South Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and others, the disagreement between the Kisangani and Goma factions of the Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie over who should sign the ceasefire agreement appears to have been resolved. Once the agreement is signed, the United Nations will dispatch a multi-disciplinary technical survey team to the region to assess the security and infrastructure of the areas provisionally identified for future deployments.

75. The peace process in Burundi has also shown some progress, with the Arusha negotiations, under the leadership of former President Julius Nyerere, having reached a crucial stage.

76. In Sierra Leone, whose people have been the victims of one of the most brutal conflicts of recent times, the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) has worked assiduously to help facilitate a negotiated solution. In close cooperation with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), its Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and other interested Member States, UNOMSIL actively supported the process of negotiations between the Government and the Revolutionary United Front, which led to the signing on 7 July 1999 of the Lomé Peace Agreement. Following the signing of the Peace Agreement, the Security Council authorized an expansion of UNOMSIL. Recognizing the close relationship between the promotion of human rights and sustainable peace, UNOMSIL, in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, continues to monitor and report on human rights abuses in Sierra Leone with a view to ending further violations.

77. The outbreak of war between Eritrea and Ethiopia in May 1998 was also a cause of profound disquiet. I immediately contacted the leaders of both parties, urging restraint and offering assistance in resolving the conflict peacefully. I have maintained contacts with both sides. I also requested Ambassador Mohammed Sahnoun to assist the mediation efforts of OAU as my Special Envoy. Ambassador Sahnoun participated in various meetings organized by OAU and visited the Eritrean and Ethiopian capitals to press for the acceptance of the peace plan, the OAU Framework Agreement.

78. The conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia has also had a tragic regional impact, particularly with regard to the conflict in Somalia. The United Nations Political Office for Somalia continues to assist regional efforts at peacemaking in Somalia that are led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). However, a lack of consensus on the mode of power-sharing among the various factions has precluded settlement of the conflict. The main challenge in the year ahead will be to strengthen international peacemaking efforts and to identify initiatives that can be supported by all the relevant actors.

79. I have also been closely following the continuing complex humanitarian emergency in the Sudan, where developments again highlight the need to address the root causes of the conflict in order to speed the search for a political solution. In 1998, I visited the area and reiterated my offer of good offices to the parties and the mediators. Following a number of internal and external consultations, we have taken further steps to support and invigorate the IGAD peace initiative on the Sudan. Assisting this process, which sadly has not been sustained, remains our primary objective in the quest to help the parties achieve a just and lasting settlement.

80. The United Nations has been involved for many years in Western Sahara, where recent consultations with the Government of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO have finally resolved a longstanding impasse over a referendum for self-determination. A new date, 31 July 2000, has been set for the referendum.

81. Africa is not, of course, the only area of security concern for the United Nations. Relations with Iraq took a turn for the worse during the year, despite a brief period of compliance with the Memorandum of Understanding signed by Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz and myself in February 1998. In the face of continuing Iraqi non-compliance, the use of force by two Member States and the division in the Security Council that followed it was predictable. Our principal demands remain unchanged, however: Iraq must fully comply with all relevant Security Council resolutions; the international community must be assured that Iraq no longer has the capacity to develop or use weapons of mass destruction; missing Kuwaiti and third country nationals must be accounted for; and Kuwait's irreplaceable archives must be returned. Meanwhile, the people of Iraq continue to suffer the effects of sanctions, although since December 1996 the oil-for-food programme has helped to alleviate some of the suffering by allowing the delivery of humanitarian goods to the country.

82. The overall situation in the Middle East remains troubling. The international community has expressed its strong support for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on relevant Security Council resolutions and the principle of land for peace. The recent resumption of the peace process and indications of a real commitment to achieving a settlement by the key protagonists are grounds for cautious optimism.

83. In some conflicts, however, hostility is so intense, and distrust so pervasive, that progress becomes extraordinarily difficult to achieve. This is still the case in Afghanistan. My Special Envoy for Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi, visited the region in October 1998 and late in February this year for talks with the authorities of neighbouring countries, as well as with the Taliban and the United Front. In July of this year, the "six plus two" group held a meeting in Tashkent following which my Special Envoy again visited the region. The United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan succeeded in convening two rounds of intra-Afghan talks in Ashgabat in February and March 1999. The parties managed to reach an agreement in principle on the sharing of government institutions. Unfortunately, in mid-spring, the Taliban leadership announced that it would not resume the negotiations started under United Nations auspices. In July, the Taliban launched an offensive against the United Front but failed to gain a decisive advantage. In August, severe fighting continued with grave humanitarian consequences. Notwithstanding these setbacks, I intend continuing my efforts to persuade both sides to resume consultations and to draw in interested Member States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, where this may be helpful, in order to explore the prospects for an eventual peace agreement.

84. The recent upsurge of fighting along and across the line of control in Kashmir, especially in the Kargil area, is a reminder of the fragility of the situation in this region. The process initiated in Lahore needs to be put back on track as there are serious grounds for concern, not least because of the dangers of an unintended escalation in a sub-continent in which nuclear devices have been tested.

85. On 5 May 1999, after intensive diplomatic efforts, Indonesia, Portugal and the United Nations concluded a set of agreements calling for the United Nations to conduct a popular consultation of the East Timorese people on whether they would accept the special autonomy status offered by Indonesia. Rejection of autonomy would lead to East Timor's separation from Indonesia and transition, under United Nations authority, to independent statehood. The United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) was established by the Security Council on 11 June 1999. A region-wide structure established by the Mission's Electoral Unit completed a successful registration process despite adverse security conditions. UNAMET also organized and conducted a comprehensive voter education campaign, worked with local authorities and East Timorese groups to foster reconciliation, and deployed civilian police and military liaison officers to advise local police and liaise with the Indonesian military on security issues. Following the successful consultation on 30 August, the United Nations will remain in East Timor to assist in implementing the result.

86. The situation in Myanmar is of continuing concern. My Special Envoy, Alvaro de Soto, visited Myanmar in October 1998 to hold consultations with the Myanmar authorities, as well as with other political actors, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, General Secretary of the National League for Democracy. Despite our concerted efforts, I am unfortunately unable to report on any genuine, substantive response by the Government of Myanmar to the appeals made to it, in successive resolutions, by the General Assembly.

87. The United Nations Political Office in Bougainville, which was established in August 1998, has played a critical role in facilitating the search for a peaceful resolu-

tion of the crisis in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea. The National Government of Papua New Guinea and the Bougainville parties have asked the Office to supervise the process of disarmament, which will allow implementation of the programme of rehabilitation and reconstruction of the island to begin as soon as possible. The new Government of Papua New Guinea has stressed that the continuation of the peace process is one of its most important objectives.

88. There have been a number of encouraging signs of improved security relations in Latin America over the past year. The Governments of Ecuador and Peru finally took the steps needed to bring their long-standing border dispute to an end, while Argentina and Chile have also agreed to settle the dispute over their frontier.

Peacekeeping

89. The past year has been a tumultuous one for United Nations peacekeeping. We are facing major new challenges with the creation of the large-scale, and in many ways unprecedented, operation in Kosovo, with preparations for a complex new mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the expansion of the mission in Sierra Leone, the strong likelihood of a new operation in Eritrea and Ethiopia, the continuing evolution of the situation in Timor, and the recent agreement by the Government of Angola for a continued United Nations presence in that country.

90. The closure of two major missions, the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola and the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force, and the completion of a follow-on operation, the United Nations Police Support

Group in Croatia, have brought the current number of peacekeeping operations to 16.

91. A sudden deterioration in the security situation led to the evacuation of the United Nations Observation Mission in Sierra Leone in January 1999. The restoration of security in Freetown allowed UNOMSIL to return in March to help in supporting the peace process, which culminated in the signing of the Lomé Peace Agreement on 7 July. The implementation of that Agreement will involve an expanded peacekeeping presence, which we are currently examining with ECOWAS.

92. The volatility and danger of the environments in which the United Nations operates are underlined by the number of casualties suffered by United Nations peacekeepers. From 1 January 1998 to 19 August 1999, 34 United Nations personnel gave their lives in peacekeeping operations. We owe them a debt of gratitude that can never be repaid.

93. Perhaps the most disturbing trend has been the growing contempt for international norms. In addition to the savage attacks on civilians, peacekeepers have also been targeted, or used as pawns to manipulate international public opinion. In this context, I warmly welcome the entry into force of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel and I would strongly encourage further ratifications by Member States. In response to these developments, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is undertaking a systematic review of the problem of violence against peacekeepers. I look forward to informing Member States of its findings as this work progresses.

94. Just as the year was tumultuous for peacekeeping, it was similarly testing for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. In accordance with the wishes

of the General Assembly, gratis personnel were phased out by the end of February. As a consequence, the Department as a whole has been reduced by almost 20 per cent during the past year. In order to adjust to the new realities, while continuing to perform its mandated functions, the Department underwent a significant restructuring. The creation or expansion of several missions, the closure and liquidation of others, and mandated planning for possible future operations have occurred in this context. Ironically, the logistics and communications area—vital for the deployment of new missions as well as the liquidation of old ones—was hardest hit by the reduction of staff.

95. This experience shows once again that preparedness requires capacities beyond those needed for current activities. The demand for peacekeeping and other field operations is, by its very nature, difficult to predict and such operations must often be established at short notice. The credibility and effectiveness of any new operation are affected by the promptness with which it is deployed. Delays provide an opportunity for those who oppose the peace process, or the terms of a settlement, to seize the initiative before United Nations personnel arrive. In determining resource requirements for the Organization, including its Headquarters staff, I trust that Member States will bear this in mind.

96. In spite of the unpredictability of events over the past year, some things remained constant. One was the continued emphasis on multidimensional peacekeeping, which is now the norm for the Organization. Multidimensional peacekeeping operations tackle a number of challenges concurrently: helping to maintain ceasefires and to disarm and demobilize combatants; assisting the parties to build or strengthen vital institutions and processes and respect for human rights, so that all concerned can pursue

their interests through legitimate channels rather than on the battlefield; providing humanitarian assistance to relieve immediate suffering; and laying the groundwork for longer-term economic growth and development on the understanding that no post-conflict system can long endure if it fails to improve the lot of impoverished people. The Organization is continuing to develop the methods to coordinate these diverse activities more effectively.

97. I have previously reported on ways in which the United Nations programmes, funds and agencies are brought together by my appointed Special Representatives in support of integrated security and development strategies. Additional innovations this year have included our work with the World Bank in the Central African Republic, where the United Nations responsibilities in security, elections and institutional reform have been matched by the Bank's efforts to assist with economic stabilization and to promote longer-term growth. The United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) played an important supportive role that enabled the peaceful and successful conduct of legislative elections in November/December 1998. MINURCA is to provide support for the presidential elections scheduled for September 1999. Unfortunately, funding for MINURCA is suffering from a worrying lack of enthusiasm among donors, and lack of funding will undoubtedly hamper the efforts of MINURCA to support and observe the elections.

98. Similarly, in Tajikistan, there was initially a very low donor response to appeals for funds to support demobilization projects, an important aspect of the mandate of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan. The resulting delays again point to the drawbacks of funding essential elements of a mandate through voluntary contributions, rather than through assessed contributions as is nor-

mally the case in peacekeeping operations. There has nevertheless been significant progress in advancing the peace process, and we are cautiously optimistic that the Mission's mandate will be fulfilled.

99. The case of Kosovo is the latest in a series of innovations in peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building that have been pursued in the 1990s in cooperation with regional and subregional organizations. In Kosovo, we are cooperating with the European Union in reconstruction and rehabilitation programmes, and with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in institution-building. Both of those organizations operate under the authority of my Special Representative. We are also working closely with the international military forces responsible for security in Kosovo to ensure unity of civilian and military efforts.

100. In 1999, the Secretariat, in collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross, finalized principles and rules on the observance of international humanitarian law by peacekeepers; these rules have been issued as a Secretary-General's bulletin. I hope that the promulgation of that bulletin will help to clarify the scope of the application of international humanitarian law to United Nations forces and operations and ensure that the required standards are observed.

Post-conflict peace-building

101. Post-conflict peace-building seeks to prevent the resurgence of conflict and to create the conditions necessary for a sustainable peace in war-torn societies. It is a holistic process involving broad-based inter-agency cooperation

across a wide range of issues. It encompasses activities as diverse as traditional peacekeeping and electoral assistance.

102. Achieving the necessary coordination and complementarity between agencies in conflict and fragile post-conflict situations continues to present a major challenge to the United Nations and its partners. Recognizing the scope of this challenge, in 1997 I designated the Department of Political Affairs, in its capacity as convener of the Executive Committee on Peace and Security, as the focal point for post-conflict peace-building.

103. The past year has seen a number of developments in United Nations post-conflict peace-building operations. Activities in the field include forward planning for a future United Nations presence in the Central African Republic when the mandate of MINURCA expires; establishing a new office dedicated to peace-building in Guinea-Bissau; sustaining the major United Nations presence in Guatemala; and consolidating long-standing peace processes in Cambodia and El Salvador and elsewhere.

104. After a year of divisive and destructive conflict in Guinea-Bissau, prospects for a return to normality have improved, albeit gradually. The United Nations Peace-building Support Office is working with the Government and people to coordinate an integrated response to the challenges of peace-building. In Liberia, the United Nations Peace-building Support Office is about to complete its second year of operation. Despite limited financial resources, the Office has supported a number of projects dealing with national reconciliation and rebuilding respect for the rule of law and human rights.

105. The United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala is mandated by the General Assembly to carry out a

range of post-conflict peace-building activities in addition to verifying the peace agreements, providing good offices and undertaking advisory and public information activities. Since 1997, considerable emphasis has been placed on human rights, particularly indigenous rights; social investment; decentralization of State activities; rural development; fiscal and judicial reforms; and the reform of public security and national defence. In 1998, these initiatives provided the basis for a constitutional reform package, which was approved by Congress but which the people failed to ratify in a national referendum in May 1999. As presidential and legislative elections approach in November 1999, continuing commitment to the peace agenda will be crucial to its sustainability.

106. In neighbouring El Salvador, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is responsible for assisting the Government with peace accord issues that remain unresolved. UNDP works in close coordination with the Department of Political Affairs, which retains responsibility for good offices. One of the greatest challenges facing the newly inaugurated Government is consolidation of the institutions that were created, or reformed, as part of the peace process, particularly those responsible for dealing with the country's public security crisis and the protection and promotion of human rights.

107. Institution-building, particularly of the judicial sector, and the protection and promotion of human rights are the key tasks of the International Civilian Mission in Haiti (MICIVIH). As in previous years, there remains much to be done to strengthen State institutions and civil society organizations. The reduced participation of the Organization of American States in MICIVIH, as from 1 July 1999, will necessarily affect our continued role, although core functions will continue to be performed. Meanwhile, the

United Nations and the international community have pledged to support the holding of legislative and local government elections by the end of 1999—a crucial requirement for Haiti's future progress.

108. During the past year, there have been welcome developments in Cambodia. With the establishment of a new Government and the collapse of the Khmer Rouge movement, the country is finally at peace and able to devote its attention to reconstruction. My Personal Representative in Cambodia and the United Nations agencies in the country remain committed to assisting the Government in its nation-building efforts, including the strengthening of democratic institutions and assistance in the promotion and protection of human rights.

Electoral assistance

109. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the implementation of comprehensive peace agreements in Angola, Cambodia, El Salvador, Mozambique and Nicaragua required the presence of major United Nations electoral missions to help organize the mandated elections. Often viewed as the final step in a long-term peacemaking process, elections symbolize the re-establishment of national authority in a new multi-party system of government. Experience has demonstrated, however, that the relationship of elections to the long-term process of peace-building is highly complex. As the “age of democratization” has entered into a new phase, the Organization has shifted its electoral assistance strategy to encompass a broader understanding of post-conflict peace-building. Elections that have in the past served predominantly as an exit strategy out of conflict situations are now seen as providing an op-

portunity for institution-building and the introduction of programmes for good governance.

110. Elections are a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for creating viable democracies. That requires the establishment or strengthening of democratic infrastructures such as electoral commissions, electoral laws and election administration structures and the promotion of a sense of citizenship and its attendant rights and responsibilities. The recent experience of the United Nations in Nigeria shows how a partnership in electoral assistance can build a base for long-term post-electoral assistance activities.

111. The United Nations wealth of experience in electoral assistance allows the Organization to tailor its programmes to meet the particular demands of its Member States with great efficacy.

The United Nations, regional organizations and security

112. During the 1990s, regional organizations have played an increasingly active role in regional security affairs, not only in the realms of preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and confidence-building, but also with respect to peace enforcement. The relationship between the United Nations and regional organizations is complex, usually fruitful, but sometimes difficult. Several lessons have emerged from recent experience.

113. First, it is imperative that regional security operations be mandated by the Security Council if the legal basis of the international security system is to be maintained. Frequently, such operations will also need the wider political support that only the United Nations can

provide, and peace settlements will often require United Nations involvement under Security Council authority.

114. Second, security policies that work in one region may not in others. Most regions do not have organizations with the capacity to carry out major peacekeeping or peace enforcement operations. Some regional organizations—most notably OAU—would like to develop a peacekeeping capacity and it is important for the international community to assist them. This is a long-term undertaking, however, and one in which the parties can count on the United Nations to play an active supporting role.

115. Third, today's complex humanitarian emergencies require equally complex multidisciplinary responses, which only the United Nations has the qualifications and experience to provide. Whether responding to crises or implementing comprehensive peace agreements, the United Nations has an unparalleled ability to coordinate action across a wide range of sectors and disciplines.

116. I support moves towards greater cooperation with regional organizations. However, as multilateral activity expands, both the Secretariat and Member States are finding that the human and financial resources allotted for new operations have not kept pace with increased demands, and are at times barely adequate. It is crucial that this situation be addressed with energy and resolve if the United Nations is to avoid a cycle in which expectations exceed capacity, bringing inevitable disappointment and a decline in confidence in the potential of the Organization.

Disarmament

117. During the past year, existing disarmament agreements were threatened by a number of developments

which are likely not only to undermine global security but also to cause an increase in global military expenditures. The disarmament machinery in the United Nations was not fully utilized during the year, and no consensus was reached on the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which could set universal goals for the immediate future. However, the United Nations has remained committed to upholding existing norms and to facilitating the necessary political will among Member States to establish new agreements to achieve global security at the lowest level of armaments commensurate with legitimate self-defence and security requirements.

118. The development of longer-range missiles and their testing by several countries, together with the development of missile defences and the fact that large numbers of missiles are ready to be launched on warning, seriously threaten peace and security. Multilaterally negotiated norms against the spread of ballistic missile technology for military purposes and restraint in missile development would considerably reduce the threat posed by ballistic missiles, whether armed with conventional weapons or capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction. Furthermore, they would substantially improve prospects for progress on bilateral and multilateral disarmament and arms control negotiations, including the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

119. The systematic and progressive reduction of nuclear weapons, with the ultimate goal of their complete elimination, will remain one of the priority tasks of the international community. Little was achieved in this area in the past year, however. Long-standing differences over how to tackle questions of nuclear disarmament continued to prevent the start of negotiations on a treaty banning the

production of fissile material, which, in the autumn of 1998, had seemed possible. Meanwhile, we have continued to support ongoing negotiations on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia, and a text of the treaty is evolving.

120. Efforts to promote entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty continue, and a conference to consider the issue is scheduled for the autumn. It is crucial that the three nuclear-weapon States that have not yet ratified the Treaty, as well as those States whose ratification is required for its entry into force, deposit their instruments promptly. The path to the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons will be smoother if there has been tangible progress in this and other areas of nuclear disarmament.

121. Disarmament activity—in the form of treaties, components of peacekeeping mandates or confidence-building measures—both supports, and is supported by, progress in social and economic development. Promotion of mine awareness, progress in mine clearance, and the provision of medical, psychological and technical assistance to mine victims, who are mainly women and children, sustain the process of socio-economic reconstruction and development in countries emerging from conflict. In May, the worldwide efforts to abolish landmines took a major step forward with the convening of the First Meeting of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, which bans anti-personnel mines and mandates their destruction. A further step towards reducing the devastation wrought by landmines will be taken in December, when the parties to Amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which constitutes a partial prohibition on landmines, will hold their first annual conference.

122. Other practical disarmament measures, such as the collection and destruction of small arms and light weapons, can reduce the potential for violence and enhance stability, thus facilitating the development process. The reduction of military budgets, especially in post-conflict countries, will increase the resources available for development. The latter issue will, we hope, be considered in depth by the re-established high-level Steering Group on Disarmament and Development.

123. The failure of the Conference on Disarmament, for the third year in succession, to agree on a programme of work and the lack of consensus on holding a special session of the General Assembly on disarmament are a source of grave and ongoing concern.

Sanctions

124. It is increasingly accepted that the design and implementation of sanctions mandated by the Security Council need to be improved, and their humanitarian costs to civilian populations reduced as far as possible. This can be achieved by more selective targeting of sanctions, as proponents of so-called “smart sanctions” have urged, or by incorporating appropriate and carefully thought through humanitarian exceptions directly in Security Council resolutions. I support both approaches.

125. Intense debate continues, both within and outside the United Nations, on how effective the existing sanctions regimes have been, whether comprehensive, like those against Iraq, or more targeted, as in the case of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. Questions remain on how best to address the problems arising from their application.

126. Since 1997, the Government of Switzerland has facilitated a dialogue between sanctions practitioners and experts, known as “the Interlaken process”. Its goal has been to explore the potential effectiveness of targeted financial sanctions, which may include freezing the financial assets and blocking the financial transactions of targeted entities or individuals. Although their efficacy remains to be tested, and several issues require resolution, the technical feasibility of such sanctions has now been established, as reflected in a report submitted to the Security Council in June 1999.