

14. There has been recognition that conventional disarmament at the global, regional and subregional levels is a vital part of the disarmament process. The questions of qualitative development, the production and use of conventional weapons as well as the issue of international arms transfers are being given more attention. In this connection, important unilateral measures have already been taken by some States, particularly China, to reduce their armed forces. Efforts are continuing in Europe where the highest concentration of armaments and armed forces exist to achieve their reduction in a mutually balanced and verifiable manner. An important step was taken towards regional disarmament by the agreement on a procedure for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace in Central America.

15. The unprecedented convergence of views on issues related to the verification of and compliance with arms limitation and disarmament agreements has the potential to remove one of the most serious obstacles to the pursuit of such agreements. Since verification of compliance relates directly to the national security concerns of each State party to an agreement, it is essential to promote such forms and methods of verification and institutional frameworks as would appropriately meet the legitimate concerns of each State party and be tailored to the requirements of each agreement.

16. While confidence-building measures are not in themselves measures of disarmament, in recent years there has been an increased awareness of their importance for the enhancement of international peace and security. This in turn has facilitated the process of arms limitation and disarmament negotiations. There is now wide support for greater openness, transparency and predictability in military matters. The outcome of the Stockholm Conference on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe has significantly contributed to strengthening co-operation and stability in the region. The Lomé Declaration on Security, Disarmament and Development in Africa constitutes a valuable contribution to security in the region.

17. Beyond the progress made in various areas related to arms limitation and disarmament, there has also been growing recognition that these efforts should be pursued in a broader context of international relations, together with such issues as regional and subregional conflicts, non-military threats to international security, social and economic development, and human rights. Actions of States to resolve crucial issues in various regional contexts, within and outside the United Nations, have had a positive bearing on the overall efforts of the international community to strengthen peace and security and to promote the disarmament process. At the International Conference on Disarmament and Development the participating States highlighted the inter-relationship between disarmament, development and security.

18. These and other developments have generated an international climate that is much improved over that of the earlier years of the present decade. However, while the positive processes and developments in international relations provide a sense of strong encouragement and hope for a more secure world, they cannot obscure the fact that the general situation with regard to armaments and armed forces is far from satisfactory.