Introductory Remarks

By

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On the occasion of the “V Foro Intercontinental de Mutualismo”

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Mr. President of the Organizacion de Entidades Mutuales de las Americas (ODEMA),

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to thank the Organizacion de Entidades Mutuales de las Americas (ODEMA) for their kind invitation to UNODA to participate in the V Foro under the working group on ‘Human Development: Priority Objective of Mutuals and of Social Economy and Solidarity Organizations’. The organizers have asked me to exchange ideas on the role of disarmament and development with particular emphasis on the prevention of conflict in the construction of safer societies during this meeting. I am delighted to do so.

The Office for Disarmament Affairs understands the need to enhance study and information on all aspects that link disarmament to development as recommended by the dedicated Governmental Expert Group’s Final Report on this issue in 2004.

In 1987 The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Final Document of the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development. In November of 2002 the General Assembly, through resolution 57/65, mandated a Group of Governmental Experts to reappraise the disarmament-development relationship taking into account major international changes and the pivotal role of security, the costs and consequences of military expenditure, the release of resources for development, the importance of multilateralism and the role of the United Nations. This appraisal report was published in 2004 making numerous recommendations.

Most notably, the report calls for mainstreaming the disarmament-development relationship; raising awareness of this relationship within the international community; engaging in a wide range of conflict-prevention measures, including those related to illicit small arms and light weapons; promoting security though greater openness, transparency and confidence; and strengthening further the role of the United Nations and other international organizations as well as the donor community towards these ends. The recommendations also include specific topics
for further research by specialized UN bodies and non-governmental organizations in order to
enhance understanding of the relationship between disarmament and development.

It is this last recommendation that brings me to engage today on the role of cooperatives
and mutual organizations in enhancing the link between disarmament and development.
Specifically, recommendation 89 expresses that “Non-governmental organizations are
encouraged to be engaged on the disarmament-development relationship”. Recommendation 92
indicates that “the United Nations should place increased emphasis on promoting public
awareness of the relationship between disarmament and development through its outreach
activities, while also taking into consideration the importance of disarmament and non-
proliferation education. The international focus on the Millennium Development Goals offers a
clear opportunity to promote understanding of the disarmament-development relationship”. And
lastly, in so far as the Millenium Development Goals refer, the Recommendation 93 of the group
of experts proposes that “the United Nations should facilitate dialogue and research on, inter alia,
the potential contribution of disarmament to the attainment of these goals, and the need to
develop a common understanding of evolving concepts such as that of Human Security”.

It is in this spirit that UNODA is participating today in the ODEMA forum and in the
three day working group which aims to develop a role for civil society in general, and mutual
help organizations and cooperatives in particular, that can both serve the Millenium
Development Goals and engage in discussions pertaining to the relationship between
disarmament and development.

I look forward to the days ahead and hope support, assist and also learn from this
dialogue that brings together international organizations, United Nations agencies, Africa and
Latin American government officials and legislators and multiple mutual organizations and
cooperatives from these two regions, such as the Union Africaine de la Mutualite and the
Chantier de L’Economie Sociale of Canada (Quebec). The presence in this forum of the
Organization of American States (OAS), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the
vicepresidency of the ECOSOC committee, among other entities will make the discussions on
the topic of development, social economy, and conflict management through, inter alia,
disarmament measures, particularly rich.
Before we commence our deliberations and at your request, I will present the short video produced by the United Nations to encourage and promote the recruitment of women at all levels of the UN system. I hope that this will inspire your organizations with similar actions to sensitize professional female candidates to express their interest in joining your organizations. I strongly believe that in diversity lies our strength as you will presently see in the video I have brought with me.

Thank you.