I am very pleased to participate in this important event commemorating the first anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 on Women in Peace and Security. The Arria Formula and the Open Discussion in the Security Council, held in October last year, provided a unique opportunity to bring gender perspectives to the centre of attention in the work of the Security Council. The resolution clearly outlines what needs to be done in all United Nations peace and security activities, including those in the critical field of disarmament -- which is one of the eight priorities of the United Nations. The challenge is to find the most effective ways to implement this path-breaking resolution throughout the United Nations.

The thirteenth operative paragraph of this resolution points explicitly to the need to incorporate gender perspectives into disarmament activities. It encourages "all those involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration [DDR] to consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and to take into account the needs of their dependants."
The resolution, however, also includes several additional paragraphs that have implications for the work of the Organization in the field of disarmament. It recommends, for example, increased participation of women in decision-making and in field-based operations. It calls for consideration of the special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement, and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction. It identifies the need for measures to support local women's peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution and the involvement of women in all of the implementation mechanisms of the peace agreements. And it underscores the need to respect the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps and settlements, taking into account the particular needs of women and girls.

Discussions on disarmament have traditionally focused on male combatants as the focus of DDR programmes. In such discussions, women appear primarily as victims of conflicts or solely in terms of their "caring" roles. But, this is an over-simplified view of reality. Conflict and post-conflict situations clearly affect all groups -- women and men and girls and boys, although often in very different ways. All those who are involved in planning and implementing disarmament activities must therefore take these important gender perspectives into account.

Without question, disarmament is one of the most important areas in which women have contributed to international peace and security. The strength of this support has only grown in time, and as more is known about the effects of nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons -- what are aptly named, "weapons of mass destruction" -- the stronger this support will grow. Landmines have also had a devastating impact upon civilian populations, especially women and children. The tragic effects of these weapons apply to everybody -- regardless of nationality, age, religion, occupation, or gender. As actual or potential victims of these weapons, as leaders in national governments, and as advocates of increased international cooperation and mutual understanding -- women have made vital contributions in the field of disarmament and will continue their efforts until these most devastating weapons are finally eliminated once and for all.

Fortunately, awareness and sensitivity to gender perspectives in different areas of disarmament have increased significantly in recent years. The practical experience of the Department of Disarmament Affairs -- especially since its re-establishment in 1998 -- has yielded many important lessons on gender and disarmament, as illustrated in several areas of our work.

We have, for example, ensured that women's issues are permanently placed on the agenda of the UN Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. Late last year, the Committee decided to convene a Subregional Conference on the Protection of Women and Children in Armed Conflict in Central Africa, and to create a network of women in peace and security for the Central African region. Once in place, this network will encourage Member States of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) to establish a gender unit within its Secretariat.

In the new approach linking the voluntary collection of arms with community development
assistance -- collectively known as "disarmament for development" -- I have personally seen that women can play a key role in implementing such initiatives. In the Albanian weapons collection programme, for example, women and children were directly involved in turning weapons over to the local authorities. We also discovered that in the "development" part of the process, it was important that the women were also involved in identifying the most pressing development needs of households and communities so that both women and men could contribute to and benefit fully from the development initiatives.

The Department of Disarmament Affairs has long recognised that, as an important step in implementing resolution 1325, we would have to seek to increase the understanding among all actors -- Member States, the United Nations and NGOs -- of the need to include a gender perspective throughout our work.

To address this challenge, the Department of Disarmament Affairs -- in collaboration with the Office of the Special Adviser for Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Mine Action Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations -- produced early this year a series of briefing notes on gender and disarmament. These briefing notes look at gender perspectives in relation to small arms, landmines, weapons of mass destruction, DDR programmes, "disarmament for development" initiatives, as well as the important contribution of women's advocacy groups in the area of disarmament. A panel organized in conjunction with the 2001 session of the Commission on the Status of Women promoted the distribution of these briefing notes to a wide audience.

It was a unique experience for me to participate on this panel and to listen while representatives of Member States, the United Nations and NGOs highlighted the important linkages between gender and disarmament and called for greater attention to these linkages in the planning and implementation of disarmament activities. Since their launch in March, the Department has distributed the briefing notes at the 2001 session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, at the recently-held Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, and at the current session of the UNGA First Committee. I also know that the Office of the Special Adviser for Gender Issues has been just as diligent -- or even more so -- in disseminating these briefing notes, since the Office has requested a second printing of these notes and DDA is hastening to comply.

We have also seen a happy marriage between the Gender NGOs and the Disarmament NGOs. In fact, the briefing notes are not only on the DDA's website, but are also on the website of several NGOs -- and the feedback we have received indicates that they are proving to be a very effective advocacy instrument.

In further cooperation with the Special Adviser's Officer, the Department has included a segment on "Gender and Disarmament" on the Agenda of its Disarmament Fellowship Programme, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Special Adviser and her Staff for what is becoming one of the highlights of the New York segment of the Fellowship Programme and for
what I understand was a most stimulating briefing given to the Fellows yesterday by a member of that Office.

As part of its consciousness-raising activities, the Department intends to include the translation and dissemination of Security Council Resolution 1325 in a project we are jointly developing with the Hague Appeal for Peace, called "Disarming Children and Youth: Developing Peace and Disarmament Education Initiatives." We need to train a new generation of children who are eager to work on disarmament and gender issues, who understand how these goals are mutually-reinforcing, and who will reject violence as a means of resolving disputes both among and within nations.

To facilitate gender mainstreaming in DDA's activities, the department gave specific attention to this issue in preparing its Programme Budget for 2002-2003. Among other things, it has sought and will continue to seek to achieve gender balance by encouraging Member States to nominate more female candidates for experts groups, for the Disarmament Fellowship Programme, and for any and all of the other meetings and events that it organizes. In addition, gender mainstreaming will be built into the activities of the Programme. To this end, the Department will request the Office of Human Resources Management and the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women to organize a competency development programme on gender mainstreaming during the biennium.

Security Council resolution 1325 invites the Secretary-General to carry out a study on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, the role of women in peace-building, and the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution. The resolution further invites him to submit a report to the Security Council on the results of this study, which will include disarmament issues as an important part of the Secretary-General's study and report. Preparation of the study and report provides a unique opportunity to further the understanding of gender perspectives in all areas of peace and security activities of the United Nations, including disarmament. The Department is committed to active participation in the Inter-agency Taskforce on Women, Peace and Security that is responsible for the implementation of the study and report.

I would also like to highlight the important contributions of women's groups and networks to increasing the awareness of gender perspectives in relation to disarmament affairs. The Department has cooperated with many such groups and we look forward to future work together in addressing critical gender issues in the field of disarmament.

While we have made significant strides in the process, there are still many challenges ahead. Based on our collective experience in advancing gender perspectives in the field of disarmament, DDA, Member States, and the NGO community might together explore some additional initiatives to achieve this goal. Because no single roadmap can guide us to this destination, each situation will require its own gender analysis.
Among the specific challenges ahead are the need to ensure equal representation of women and men on all bodies dealing with disarmament, as experts or representatives of civil society. We must do more to support the development of expertise on weapons and the political skills involved in arms negotiations among women, to ensure increased gender balance in decision-making. We will work to facilitate the work of women's groups, networks, and research groups organizing around disarmament. We will give greater attention to women as a key target group in developing campaigns and awareness-raising materials and mobilizing public support for disarmament. We recognize the need for research on developing a better understanding of how gender roles contribute to the development of conflicts and arms proliferation, giving particular attention to the practical and policy implications. These are all important challenges that lie ahead.

Another useful way to advance gender perspectives on disarmament is by breaking-down statistics on casualties from small arms and landmines by sex and age and analyzing and addressing the causal factors behind the statistics. We know that DDR programmes would benefit from efforts to identify all ex-combatants and to consult with both women and men to understand their needs and priorities. We need to ensure that local organizations -- including women's groups and networks -- are actively involved in DDR and "disarmament for development" programmes. And more broadly, we need to give particular attention to increasing the potential for women's participation in decision-making in all areas of disarmament activities.

In conclusion, much needs to be done before gender perspectives are fully integrated into the work of the United Nations and its Member States on disarmament affairs. Many positive steps have been taken, however, and I am convinced that the Security Council resolution 1325 will provide a strong impetus for an increased focus on gender perspectives in disarmament. This is an area where close collaboration is needed between Member States, the United Nations and civil society. I am pleased that such collaboration has begun.

Thank you.