I would like to begin by thanking the Inter-Parliamentary Union not just for its courtesy of inviting me to address this Hearing, but also for its wise selection of the theme for this event -- *From Disarmament to Lasting Peace: Defining the Parliamentary Role*. I am pleased to address today the specific issue of strengthening international regimes for arms control and disarmament.

This particular session is actually focused on two subjects -- for “arms control” seeks to
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regulate how certain weapons are produced, marketed, or used, while “disarmament” seeks their physical elimination. The United Nations has worked on behalf of both goals for over a half century -- it has sought to eliminate weapons of mass destruction and to control various conventional arms.

Fortunately, we have multilateral treaties that ban the production or possession of chemical and biological weapons, while the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons couples non-proliferation obligations with a commitment by all its States Parties to pursue good faith negotiations on nuclear disarmament. These regimes are assisted by the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and by various coalitions of suppliers of weapons-related materials -- such as the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Australia Group.

Yet there is little treaty law governing conventional weapons and no multilateral convention covering missiles. The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (or CCW) outlaws some very specific types of such weaponry, due to their uniquely inhuman effects. There is also the Mine Ban Convention, and Amended Protocol II of the CCW Convention -- which also deals with mines, booby traps, and other such devices. Various groups of states have united for specific arms control initiatives -- including the Missile Technology Control Regime, the International Code of Conduct for missiles, and the Wassenaar Arrangement for dual-use goods and some types of conventional arms, though these groups lack a universal membership and their controls are not legally binding.

The policies by individual states offer the last layer of reinforcement of the basic treaties and the various suppliers regimes. Some unilateral disarmament and arms control initiatives, for example, deserve some special recognition. The Bush/Gorbachev “presidential nuclear initiatives” in 1991 and 1992 led to a substantial reduction in the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons. Another example is the unilateral decision by President Nixon to get rid of the American stockpile of biological weapons, which led the way to the Biological Weapons Convention.

Multilateral treaties, of course, often take many years to negotiate. They can involve some difficult technical and political challenges and require ratification. Yet it is generally agreed that serious arms control and disarmament initiatives should meet some basic criteria -- including the goals of universality, irreversibility, bindingness, the capacity to verify compliance, and some means for enforcement. These are all difficult to achieve globally by unilateral actions or ad hoc coalitions alone.

We have, therefore, seen several recent collective initiatives to reinforce these multilateral weapons regimes. On 27 June 2002, leaders attending the G8 Summit in Kananaskis, Canada,
announced a “Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction,” which included a joint commitment to raise up to $20 billion to advance these goals, initially for use in Russia. On 28 April this year, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1540, which required all States to adopt measures to criminalize assistance to non-State actors seeking to acquire weapons of mass destruction. The resolution also required all States to establish domestic controls to prevent the global proliferation of such weapons.

I am sure that this particular audience already has a solid understanding of the many contributions that parliaments make in strengthening the various treaty regimes. After all, parliaments are involved in the ratification of these treaties. They are responsible for enacting relevant implementing legislation and for providing the money to sustain national commitments. They also oversee the implementation of government policies and help in educating the public and representing their views. I view parliaments as essential partners in achieving the important goals of these regimes -- the policies needed to sustain these regimes require a strong popular base of support.

I know that many of you have long fought for human rights, including equal rights for all human beings. Yet wars have resulted in the violation of the most basic human right -- the right of innocent civilians to live in peace. Every year, armed conflicts lead to thousands upon thousands of casualties, all too often involving women and children. In response, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 in October 2000 -- its first resolution specifically addressing the impact of war on women, and the contributions of women to conflict resolution and peace. The Department of Disarmament Affairs is implementing an “action plan” to integrate a gender perspective into all of our major programme activities -- what we call “gender mainstreaming.” We are indeed proud of these efforts.

Yet enormous challenges lie ahead for these regimes. Their supporters must be vigilant for setbacks, which would include the development of new weapons, non-compliance with disarmament or non-proliferation commitments, the rise of new forms of terrorism, or the weakening of political or financial support to fulfil disarmament and arms control commitments. The parliaments of the world will be indispensable in achieving the noble goals of these treaty regimes.

I hope your deliberations will produce some new insights on how parliaments can expand their contributions in the search for solutions of some of the difficult problems facing the world in achieving arms control and disarmament goals. Because of the importance of your work, I wish to close simply by expressing my appreciation for your efforts, and by extending my best wishes for a successful Hearing.
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