Thank you for giving me the floor. Recent events have served to highlight the timeliness of this discussion, as every week – sometimes every day – brings new terrible tales of loss of innocent lives due to terrorist acts.

It is imperative that our common fight against terrorism is pursued within the firm framework of international law. In this regard, the 12 legal instruments on terrorism already adopted under the auspices of the United Nations must be signed, ratified and implemented by all Member States. In light of the horrendous attack on the United Nations office in Baghdad on 19 August of last year – where we lost good friends and colleagues – I believe that we should include one more convention in this list of anti-terrorism instruments, namely, the Convention on the Protection of United Nations and Associated Personnel. Where there are gaps in this legal framework, they need to be filled, for example, through the agreement on a comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.
In this context, the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the Security Council plays a vital role in enhancing States’ capacity to combat terrorism effectively. But, as the most recent report of the CTC highlighted, a large number of States still have not complied with their obligations to report on their compliance with Security Council Resolution 1373. Here, regional organizations could make a particularly important contribution. Many States cannot implement their obligations due to lack of human and financial resources. Regional organizations could assist States in this regard, thus helping them fulfill their obligations.

At a practical level, we need to prevent terrorists from obtaining the means to perpetrate their heinous crimes. Given the speed of development and spread of sophisticated technology, restricting the financial and material resources of terrorists is of paramount importance. This includes – but is certainly not limited to – blocking channels of funds, as well as seizing assets and property. Likewise, we need to prevent the formation and proliferation of existing terrorist networks by applying effective measures to control phenomena closely associated with terrorism, including trafficking in narcotics and human beings, as well as money laundering.

Yet, severing the financial and material lifelines of terrorism will not suffice. We need to address the root causes of terrorism. In order to fight terrorism
effectively, we need to understand what drives it and what sustains it at an ideological level. When faced with senseless attacks on civilians, it may seem an almost impossible exercise to attempt to comprehend what brings people to commit such acts. Experiences of injustice, feelings of exclusion and marginalization, a sense of frustration that political, economic and social grievances cannot be addressed through appropriate political channels can fuel terrorism – and sympathy for terrorist acts. Let me be clear: nothing can justify terrorism. But, understanding the underlying causes of terrorism is not the same as excusing terrorism or condoning it in any way: it is an essential part of any comprehensive strategy to combat terrorism. If we close our eyes to this dimension, we shut off a critical avenue to a solution.

In this context, I would like to reiterate the importance of respecting human rights in the fight against terrorism. Terrorist acts are themselves violations of human rights, in particular the right to life. Terrorism also creates an environment that destroys the right of people to live in freedom of fear. States have a duty to protect their citizens against this threat. We must work to make sure that upholding human rights standards and uprooting terrorist networks do not become contradictory efforts. Rather, the two should be mutually reinforcing. Strengthening human rights standards – not weakening them – is in fact an integral part of the fight against terrorism.
In this connection, we need to take into account the significant contribution that civil society – including non-governmental organizations, business and media – can make in the fight against terrorism. Together with States, they can contribute to raising awareness of the illegitimacy of terrorism, thus undercutting the moral support that helps sustain terrorists and their networks.

The potential for further contributions by the global business community to combat terrorism is often overlooked, although business – for example, transportation, travel and tourism, to mention a few obvious examples – is often very directly affected by terrorist acts.

We need to enhance cooperation at both international and regional levels in the fight against terrorism and complement our efforts in this regard. It is here that cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations is essential. This is clearly illustrated in the regular exchanges between the Security Council’s Counter-Terrorism Committee and regional organizations, with the next one being scheduled to take place here in Vienna on 12 March 2004.

I hope that our discussions today will contribute to the on-going efforts both at the United Nations and at the regional level.

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.