Mr. Chairman
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a great pleasure for me to be with you today for this our 13th high-level meeting of the Tripartite Plus Process. I appreciate this opportunity to deliver a few opening remarks on behalf of the United Nations, which is so well represented here today. I thank our chairman and his staff for bringing us together today.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We meet at a time of profound change. This is particularly apparent when it comes to the range and nature of threats to international security and stability, which are in flux. Developments and innovations that clearly have a beneficial component, may also — if not kept in check — have negative consequences. Advances in technology have also led to new and more lethal weapons, and have enabled individuals and groups to develop destructive weapons
independent of any state. Instant global communication may in addition to facilitating increased trade and flows of information, enable the formation of criminal networks or terrorist cells across national borders.

As the international security landscape has been transformed – and continues to be transformed – the perception of threat, as well as the understanding of the connections between threats and of their relative importance have undergone significant change as well. To many people, poverty, disease and inequality between and within societies seem to pose much more imminent threats than terrorism. For some, daily violence of conflict fought with small weapons – supplied either legally or illegally – appears a more real threat than weapons of mass destruction. The diversity of perceptions of threats is complemented by a change in state authority with an increase in the power and influence of a wide range of non-state actors – including transnational business, non-governmental organizations and civil society more broadly.

These new and old threats – or maybe rather old threats in unprecedented constellations – severely test the adequacy of our collective security mechanisms. Yet, over the past year, positions of United Nations Member States evolved from a position of sharp differences to a realization of the need for collective responses to common problems.
Our challenge is to adjust our institutions and multilateral mechanism to address these new threats and challenges. In his speech to the United Nations General Assembly on 23 September 2003, the Secretary-General responded to this ever-changing security environment and to the differences in the perceptions of threat that are the result of these changes. We have reached a fork in the road, he said. If we are to make collective measures credible and convincing, we need to make them work for all and for all types of threats. In particular, we need to balance our attention to the so-called ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ threats.

In so doing, we need to keep in mind that while armed conflicts and terrorism often have very diverse causes, they are regularly linked to poverty, inequality and different forms of injustice. As an example of the complex linkages across issues, extreme poverty and the spread of infectious diseases do not, in and of themselves, lead to terrorism. But they may help fuel conditions for the disintegration of effective state structures where terrorists may find both shelter and support. Development is essential if we are to achieve lasting global peace. But, at the same time, development can only take root in conditions of security and stability: the two are closely connected.

This is why the Secretary-General created the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. The Panel is tasked with examining the major threats and challenges the world faces in the field of peace and security, including
economic and social issues insofar as they relate to peace and security. Based on this comprehensive analysis of security issues, the panel will make concrete proposals on how to strengthen the international system of collective security. The Panel’s mandate thus clearly recognizes the linkages between the so-called ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ threats. The need to reinforce our collective security structures stems from our key understanding that a threat to some is a threat to all. This was also recognized and acknowledged by State members of the United Nations at the high-level segment of the current General Assembly where the centrality of multilateral approaches was emphasized.

This nexus between the need for development and maintenance of international peace and security is also evident in the Millennium Declaration and the eight Millennium Development Goals, adopted by world leaders in 2000. Here, the need to fight extreme poverty, to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS and to provide primary education was coupled with the need to eliminate weapons of mass destruction. All these issues are connected: our ability to address either one of these threats depends on our willingness to confront the others. In light of the importance of achieving the Millennium Development Goals and their close relationship with the threats and challenges that we will be discussing throughout the day, I hope that as a result of our discussions today, we could identify one or two themes that would enable us to make a collective contribution to attaining the Development Goals. In this regard, you may wish to note that, at its forthcoming session in 2005, the General Assembly will
conduct a comprehensive review of the progress made thus far in realizing these Goals. Our discussions here – and possibly also at our 2005 annual meeting in Strasbourg – could well feed into this central stock-taking exercise in support of the **Millennium Development Goals**.

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

All of these threats and challenges – either by themselves or in combination – are bigger than any single State, single institution, or single organization could tackle effectively. We need partnerships – at the international level and at the regional level, and there must be close coordination and interaction between these levels. The need for firm and fruitful partnerships among all stakeholders is also reflected in the **Millennium Development Goals** themselves – in goal 8 that calls for a partnership for global development. The value of partnerships becomes increasingly important as the challenges that we face become increasingly complex and interrelated.

This growing importance of collaboration between the United Nations and regional organizations, as envisaged under Chapter 8 of the United Nations Charter, was also emphasized during the Secretary-General’s recent visit to the institutions of the European Union. In this connection, I am pleased to note a strong presence from these institutions, and I look forward to your contributions here today.
Regional organizations contribute greatly to the efforts of the United Nations, particularly in the field, and we look forward to continuing and enhancing these very constructive working relations. As you know, at the 5th high-level meeting between the Secretary-General and regional organizations in July 2003, there was a call to increase the frequency of these frank exchanges. These informal consultations, conducted within the framework of this ‘Tripartite Plus Process’, also contribute to the ongoing strengthening of relations between the United Nations and our regional partners. They form part of an on-going elaboration of how we can ensure that our activities complement each other for the greatest possible impact – whether we address ‘hard’ or ‘soft’ threats. Our close collaboration and coordination is especially important at the field level, in particular in conflict situations where our organizations are co-deployed. Much has been achieved already – our field offices do work together well in many instances – but we can strengthen these efforts. I look forward to the debate on this issue under agenda item 3.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Throughout our discussions today, I think it may be useful for us to consider the three key priorities for the international community as highlighted by the Secretary-General. In order to confront the threats and challenges of the 21st century effectively, we need to refocus the world’s attention on (1) development and fighting poverty, (2) on strengthening our system of
collective security, and (3) on rebuilding trust and confidence between people of different faiths and cultures. I am pleased to note that the comprehensive agenda before us recognizes the variety — and complexity — of the threats that the international community faces.

Based on this agenda, I look forward to a frank and fruitful dialogue.

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.