This session will study Costa Rica's unique experience in the context of these regional developments.

The country has consistently ranked high in terms of human development and environmental performance indexes.

Since adopting Article 12, Costa Rica has not, unlike its neighbors, experienced civil war or conflict. Moreover, after allocating its military budget to education and social programs, the country has had and continues to play in Asia and in the world.

Costa Rica abolished its army in 1948 - a move incorporated in the Constitution the following year as Article 12. Throughout the 60 years that have followed, Costa Rica has demonstrated that states can exist peacefully without maintaining armed forces or self-defense forces. Since adopting Article 12, Costa Rica has not, unlike its neighbors, experienced civil war or conflict. Moreover, after allocating its military budget to education and culture, the country has consistently ranked high in terms of human development and environmental performance indexes.

Following the Costa Rican precedent, several Latin American countries have taken significant steps towards peace in recent months: the Constitutive Treaty of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), signed in May 2008, includes a clause promoting a culture of peace and a world free of nuclear weapons. A few months later, Ecuador and Bolivia adopted new constitutions in which they define themselves as pacifist countries that promote a culture of peace and universal disarmament, and that condemn the use of weapons of mass destruction and the imposition of foreign military facilities on their soils.

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**English will be the working language of the conference.**