LITHUANIA

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STATEMENT
at the UN 63rd GA First Committee
Thematic debate on Conventional Weapons

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

I would like to address this Committee in my capacity as the President-designate of the Second Conference of the High Contracting Parties to CCW Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War.

The States Parties to Protocol V agreed on the establishment of a specific forum, Meetings of Experts to facilitate co-ordination and co-operation among States Parties on issues relevant to the implementation of Protocol V of the CCW.

I wish to inform you of the Meeting of Experts of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V of the CCW, which was held in Geneva from 2 to 4 July 2008. The Meeting succeeded in implementing a firm but flexible framework for international cooperation. This was achieved through the active involvement of five Coordinators from Austria, Croatia, Hungary, India, and the Netherlands, who were responsible to lead the discussions on the different substantive aspects of the Protocol’s implementation, notably on the issues of Clearance; Cooperation and assistance, and requests for assistance; Generic electronic template, and national reporting; Generic preventive measures; and Victim assistance.

Modalities on implementation of these issues were discussed during the informal meeting and recommendations will be presented for the approval by the Second Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V, which will be held in Geneva on 10 and 11 November 2008.

I wish to congratulate 13 new States parties to Protocol V which acceded since the First Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention, held in Geneva in November 2007. I hope to see more States acceding to the Protocol in the foreseeable future, which is also in conformity with the implementation of the Plan of Action to Promote Universality of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Protocols, adopted by the Third Review Conference in November 2006.

Last year, during the 62nd session of the UN General Assembly, UNODA – European Union Joint Initiative to Promote the Universality of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons was launched. The Joint Action covered a series of regional and sub-regional workshops which have been
organized since the beginning of 2008, *inter alia*, the first one in Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic, for the region of Latin America and the Caribbean in March; the second and third workshops in Lome, Togo, for the African regions in April; and the fourth one in Almaty, Kazakhstan, for the region of Central Asia in September. Two more workshops are envisaged to be held for the regions of the Middle East and the Mediterranean, and Asia in the months ahead. The main goal of the seminars is to promote the accession to the CCW by States in the respective regions through providing a forum for relevant government officials to be informed on the content of the Convention and its Protocols, and recent CCW-related developments. The outcome of these outreach activities can already be seen by the increase in the number of CCW States Parties from 103 last year to 108 States Parties as of this month. Also it relates to an increase in membership to different Protocols to the Convention as well.

The CCW Sponsorship Programme was established in 2006 as an important component supporting the efforts to promote the universality of the CCW. And I have the honour to chair the Programme’s Steering Committee coordinating its activities. In practical terms the Sponsorship Programme is intended to support the participation of the representatives of States Parties, especially from ERW-affected and mine-affected countries that have limited resources, to participate in the CCW-related activities. Priority, in this case, is accorded to states which, according to the United Nations, are the least developed countries. Another purpose of the Programme is to provide Signatory States and States not yet parties to the Convention with an opportunity to participate in CCW-related activities and to become acquainted with the work related to the Convention.

Furthermore, the Sponsorship Programme is not only limited to organizing and managing accommodation and travel expenses for official government representatives, but it also supports the attendance of appropriate qualified experts with field experience or of scholars, to prepare studies and presentations on relevant certain topics of interest at CCW meetings or seminars. Since the Sponsorship Programme is financed by voluntary contributions only, I would like to convey my deep appreciation and gratitude to those States that have contributed financially to the Programme, namely Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, India, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Turkey, and in particular to the European Commission for their generous contributions. Thanks to this financial support the Programme is fully functional and has significantly helped enhance the cooperation, the exchange of information and the consultations among the States Parties as well as those States still outside the Convention on many issues related to the universal observance of the norms and principles enshrined in the Convention and its Protocols.

You are aware that the CCW has increased its activities and implementation performance during the past few years, especially with regard to carrying out the obligations under Protocol V. In order to maintain and guarantee that the implementation and universalization of the Convention as a whole continues to receive adequate support and professional advice in the future, I believe that it is timely and appropriate to invite all the CCW States Parties to consider the possibility of strengthening the support for the Convention’s implementation. The establishment of an Implementation Support Unit for this Convention would secure the continuity and stability of the support provided by officers of ODA to the CCW States Parties. It will help to establish a permanent secretariat dedicated to this Convention. It will help to preserve the institutional memory of the Convention and its process and I encourage all CCW States Parties to seriously consider this issue, which shall be discussed at the upcoming Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention in Geneva on 13 and 14 November 2008.