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STATEMENT

By

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Mr. Chair,

My Government believes that improved security for all can be achieved at considerably lower levels of armaments than those that exist today. This is certainly applicable also in the conventional field. Arms control regimes are as critically needed for conventional weapons as they are for weapons of mass destruction. We need such instruments for promoting stability and confidence at global and regional level.

Let me also reiterate Norway’s full support to the Geneva Declaration on armed violence and development.

Mr. Chair,

Disarmament remains a security concern for states, but must also be seen from a human security perspective. We must not shy away from considering the humanitarian impact of certain weapons and munitions, and if need be, take action. There can be no doubt that certain conventional weapons are causing unacceptable human harm, and severely impact prospects for long term development. We are making progress in addressing these severe challenges. But much remains to be done.

In our general statement, we welcomed the adoption of the Convention on Cluster Munitions by more than 100 states in Dublin in May this year. Today even more states have expressed their intention to sign the Convention.

Use of cluster munitions has been the cause of human suffering for more than 50 years. The Convention on Cluster Munitions is a categorical ban on cluster munitions. It prohibits the use, production and transfer of cluster munitions. The convention strengthens international humanitarian law, and provides a framework for implementation. The Convention on Cluster Munitions not only addresses a humanitarian problem, but it has also great value in preventing a future humanitarian disaster that could easily reach the magnitude of the landmine problem.

The Norwegian government has invited all UN member states to sign the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Oslo on 3–4 December 2008. We welcome all future states parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions to attend the Oslo Signing Conference.

We will work with other states parties on the implementation and universalisation of the Convention. The Convention on Cluster Munitions has already started to establish itself as a new international norm. The experience with the Mine Ban Convention and other conventions is that a new legally binding instrument becomes an international norm which goes beyond the membership of the Convention.

As in the case with the Mine Ban Convention, the Cluster Munitions Convention is a result of cross regional partnerships between affected and non-affected states, and a process where states worked closely with UN organisations, the ICRC and civil society organised in the Coalition on Cluster Munition.
Mr. Chair,

We look forward to the next review conference on the Mine Ban Convention in 2009. While there can be no doubt that the Mine Ban Convention has been a success, we will also face challenges in meeting important deadlines in stockpile destruction and mine clearance.

From our perspective, extension requests should be well documented so that there is no doubt about the realities behind such an application. Extensions must not be an escape clause of convenience.

Norway remains ready to assist states in fulfilling their obligations in accordance with the Mine Ban Convention. We encourage other donor countries to commit themselves in continuing their assistance.

Through the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Mine Ban Convention, we have made important progress in the field of humanitarian disarmament, but we still have to address other threats to human security in war and armed conflict.

We must now make renewed efforts in combating illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Small arms kill half a million people each year. Small arms fuel conflicts. Small arms hamper reconciliation and post conflict recovery. Small arms have a negative impact on long-term development.

Seven years ago the international community agreed on the UN Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (PoA). It was regarded as a point of departure for developing new international instruments to better combat illegal trade in small arms.

Norway has provided financial support for the implementation of the PoA. Norway is ready to respond positively to the current request from UNODA/CAB to contribute to the Global and Regional Disarmament Trust Fund 2009-2010. Norway has endeavoured to contribute to the further development of norms against illicit trade in small arms.

Yet we are concerned over the slow progress in further strengthening of the PoA. Multilateral efforts to fight the proliferation of small arms and light weapons clearly need to be reinvigorated. In doing so, we must recognise the important role of regional and sub-regional institutions, and not least the importance of national responsibility.

Norway welcomes the outcome of the Third Biennial Meeting of States (BMS3), with the emphasis on international cooperation, assistance, and national capacity building. Likewise, its focus on illicit brokering, stockpile management and an international tracing instrument (ITI).

Norway greatly appreciates the lead taken by United Kingdom towards an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Norway has co-sponsored the ATT resolution. It is vital to make full use of the open-ended working group, and work towards a legally binding treaty which clearly will provide an added value. In the upcoming process we will emphasis the need to secure that an ATT fully incorporate International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights. We also look forward to the active involvement of civil society in the process ahead.