STATEMENT BY

AMBASSADOR JOHANNES C. LANDMAN

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS
TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

ON

CONVENTIONAL ARMS ISSUES

AT

THE FIRST COMMITTEE
OF THE 63RD UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY
NEW YORK, 22 OCTOBER 2008
Mr Chairman,

I.

I have the honour to introduce on behalf of at present 74 co-sponsors the draft-resolution contained in document A/C.1/L.51 entitled “Transparency in Armaments”.

The original reasoning behind the “Transparency in Armaments” resolution, which the Netherlands has traditionally submitted, is the notion that transparency in military matters, particularly transparency in transfers of armaments, contributes to confidence and security building.

With this in mind, the 1991 Transparency in Armaments resolution 46/36L established the UN Register of Conventional Arms, in which all United Nations Member States can provide data, on a voluntary basis, on their imports and exports of arms. Member States can also make available background information regarding their military holdings, procurement through national production, relevant policies and transfers of small arms and light weapons. In this way the Register creates transparency and contributes to confidence and security building.

Every three years a Group of Governmental Experts reviews the operation and further development of the UN Register of Conventional Arms. The last time such a GGE was convened was in 2006. The recommendations of the Secretary-General, based on the results of this group, were adopted with resolution 61/77.

This 2008 draft-resolution notes the continued importance of an enhanced level of transparency in armaments for confidence-building and security among Member States and the important contribution of the UN Register of Conventional Arms in this regard. It requests the Secretary-General to prepare a report to the 64th Session of the General Assembly on the operation of the Register and its further development and to do so with the assistance of a Group of Governmental Experts to be convened next year.

Mr Chairman,

The Delegation of the Netherlands is happy that, as in previous years, the resolution enjoys the support of a large number of co-sponsors from across all regions and expresses the hope that it will be adopted with the overwhelming support it has received in the past.
II.

Mr Chairman,

I would also like to address this Committee in my capacity as the President of the 2007 First Conference of the High Contracting Parties to CCW Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War (ERW).

The Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War is the youngest of the five protocols to the 1980 Convention on Prohibitions and Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons that May be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. It was negotiated by the CCW Group of Governmental Experts for two years and was adopted in November 2003.

The Protocol is the first ever international instrument to address the serious post-conflict humanitarian problems caused by unexploded and abandoned ordnance. It focuses on a series of generic post-conflict remedial measures as well as preventive measures intended to impact on reducing the number of civilians killed and injured by explosive remnants of war.

The Protocol establishes obligations for
(i) the users of munitions that may become ERW, in particular to record and retain information on the use or abandonment of explosive ordnance, as well as to transmit such information to the party in control of the affected area;
(ii) the States in control of the ERW-affected areas – to clear, remove and destroy ERW and take all feasible measures to protect civilians from the risk and effects of ERW; and
(iii) all States parties in a position to do so, to provide assistance for the clearance and destruction of ERW and related activities.

Pursuant to the provisions of the Protocol, the First Conference of the High Contracting Parties to CCW Protocol V was convened in November last year. The Conference considered the implementation of the Protocol on ERW and successfully accomplished to set up a framework for exchange of information and co-operation, as detailed in the Final Document of the First Conference.

Allow me to highlight briefly the specific terms of the decisions taken by the First Conference:

- The States Parties to Protocol V agreed on the establishment of a forum to facilitate co-ordination and co-operation among the States Parties on issues relevant to the implementation of CCW Protocol V. It is an informal mechanism, called the Meetings of Experts.
- The States Parties to Protocol V decided to establish a separate ERW database consisting of the requests for assistance by the ERW-affected States, containing relevant information on their ERW status as well as an appraisal of their needs.
- The States Parties to Protocol V established a national reporting mechanism on the measures they have taken to implement the provisions of the Protocol.

---

1 CCW/P.V/CONF/2007/1
✓ The States Parties to Protocol V focused, in particular, on the necessity to create a culture of recording and retaining of information on the use or abandonment of explosive ordnance and adopted an electronic template for effective recording and retaining, as well as transfer of information on such used or abandoned explosive ordnance, thus facilitating and accelerating clearance.

✓ The First Conference emphasized the importance of the universalization of the Protocol and agreed on specific measures aimed at promoting wider adherence to this important legal instrument.

✓ The First Conference also decided on the priority topics for the 2008 Meeting of Experts, as well as on the office-holders for 2008. In particular, five Coordinators from Austria, Croatia, Hungary, India, and the Netherlands, were appointed to guide the deliberations on the different substantive topics 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.

Pursuant to the relevant decisions of the First Conference, the 2008 Meeting of Experts of the High Contracting Parties to CCW Protocol V, which was held in Geneva from 2 to 4 July this year, will report to the Second Conference on 10 and 11 November 2008. The Conference will evaluate the Protocol’s first year of operation and will approve any recommendations made by the Meeting of Experts that it deems appropriate.

Last but not least, I would like to add my voice to that of my distinguished colleague from Lithuania, Ambassador Borisovas, who, in his capacity of President-designate of the Second Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V, informed you yesterday about the various activities undertaken to promote universality of the Protocol and the CCW as a whole.

Since November last year, an additional 13 States have notified their consent to be bound by Protocol V, bringing the current total to 48. This is already a significant increase, but much more is needed and I take the opportunity to call upon those States that have not yet done so to ratify the CCW and, in particular, to express their consent to be bound by Protocol V without delay.

Thank you, Mr Chairman