STATEMENT BY

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FIRST COMMITTEE

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Mr. Chairman,

Since this is the first time that I take the floor in this body in a formal meeting I would like to take this opportunity to commend you Mr. Chairman and the other members of the Bureau and for your and respectively their excellent stewardship of the Committee.

As far as the thematic debate is concerned, Germany fully associates itself with the statement made by the European Union on this cluster, as well as other clusters.

I take the floor today to introduce two draft resolutions:

- together with France, Germany presents draft resolution L.44 on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus;
- and together with Romania, Germany presents draft resolution L.43 on objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures.

First, on draft resolution L.44:

France and Germany first presented a draft resolution on the issue of conventional ammunition in 2005. The intention was to raise the attention for questions relating to conventional ammunition, which had been neglected, in our view, in discussions on international arms control. What resulted was a process focusing on the most urgent issue, which is the accumulation of ammunition stockpiles in surplus.

The 2006 resolution established a Group of Governmental Experts to consider the matter in greater detail and further steps to enhance international cooperation. The Group of Governmental Experts worked comprehensively on the management and security of ammunition stockpiles in surplus, starting from the basic consideration that stockpiles in surplus are largely the result of inadequate stockpile management policies and practices. The Group developed a set of conclusions and recommendations that are meant to assist States in improving their national stockpile management capacities. The report of the group was submitted to the General Assembly in document A/63/182.

The text of the 2008 resolution, adopted in the General Assembly by consensus, endorsed the report of the Group of Governmental Experts. In addition to strongly encouraging States to implement the recommendations of the GGE, the Resolution – as this year’s draft resolution “Encourages States in a position to do so to contribute, on a voluntary and transparent basis, to the development within the United Nations of technical guidelines for the stockpile management of conventional ammunition, which would be available for States to use on a voluntary basis, in order to assist States in improving their national stockpile management capacity, preventing the growth of conventional ammunition surpluses and addressing wider risk mitigation.”. This takes up paragraph 72 of the report of the Group of Governmental Experts.
This year's draft resolution serves to further encourage member states to implement the recommendations contained in the report by the Group of Governmental Experts and to support the development within the United Nations of technical guidelines for the stockpile management of conventional ammunition. The Office for Disarmament Affairs has started a Project this year -- with substantial funding from Germany -- to develop the Guidelines mentioned before. It is a three year project, reaching into 2011 that foresees the publication of several volumes of recommendations. As the financing for the whole project is not yet secured so far, the authors of the draft resolution find it appropriate to continue to encourage states to support UN-ODA in the development of those guidelines. As a result, this year's draft resolution is a straight-forward follow-up to the 2008 version which contains technical amendments, but no substantial changes.

Finally I would like to indicate that the draft resolution is open for sponsorship. We hope that -- like last year - the draft resolution will be adopted without a vote, i.e. by consensus.

Mr. Chairman,

As I have the floor, allow me to introduce a second draft resolution, contained in document L.43. Together with Romania, Germany is tabling on our draft resolution entitled "Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures".

This biennial draft resolution is a follow-up to the 2007 version with only a few minor, mainly technical amendments, recalling the establishment of a Group of Governmental Experts to review the operation and further development of the Standardized Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures. The standardized reporting format covers expenditures on personnel, operations and maintenance, procurements and construction and on research and development. It is our belief that increase in transparency can contribute to building confidence, thus contributing in the longer term to achieving overall reductions in military expenditures in the interest of strengthening global peace and security.

The UN reporting system for military expenditures was introduced almost 30 years ago. Although the international framework has dramatically changed since then, the reporting system has remained almost unaltered. The establishment of a group of governmental experts by resolution 62/13 in 2007 to review the instrument sends a clear message that the United Nations devote greater attention to the subject of military expenditures. The group will be commencing its work in 2010.

The group of governmental experts will face the difficult task to discuss and find solutions for a very complex set of topics, e.g. how to improve the quality of the data submitted and to broaden participation in the instrument. In this context, I should like to highlight paragraph 6 (b) of the draft
resolution encouraging Member States to provide their views and suggestions on how to improve the reporting system. Please allow me to appeal to Member States to provide the Secretary-General with constructive comments and ideas which could feed into the work of the Group of Governmental Experts and thus improve the operation and efficiency of the reporting system.

So far, more than 120 States have participated in the UN reporting instrument at least once. From 2002 to 2006, the level of submissions by States to the reporting system has remained relatively stable, reaching an average of about 80 per year. Unfortunately, in the last two years a decrease of submissions had to be noticed -- a trend that we should all strive to reverse. Therefore, I should like to appeal to all countries that have not yet participated to join the instrument by submitting information next year.

A sustained effort is being made by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs -- and here I would like to express my gratitude to the Office -- to increase familiarity with the procedures of the two global arms transparency instruments maintained and operated by the United Nations Secretariat, the Register of Conventional Arms and the Standardized Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures, in order to attain greater and more consistent participation. I would refer to the leaflet handed out by UNODA with background information on the item of "Objective information on Military Matters and Transparency in Armaments".

Mr. Chairman,

Within the past decade, worldwide military expenditures have risen to historic levels -- by an estimated increase of 45 per cent from 1999 to 2008. The funds spent in this field are lacking in other areas. Given the fact that there is no reliable data on military spending available for a number of countries, we believe that a fully updated UN reporting system on military expenditures could provide the internationally accepted information basis needed to contribute to transparency and confidence-building.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank delegations that have co-sponsored our consensus resolution this year, bringing the number of sponsors to more than 60. Let me encourage others to join the group of co-sponsors; our draft resolution remains open for co-sponsorship. I express my hope that this draft resolution will once again be adopted without a vote.

Thank you for your attention.