Statement

by

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Head of Delegation

at the

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Thematic Discussion on Conventional Weapons

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Mr Chairman,

in 2012 two important events in the conventional arms control sector will take place: the concluding negotiations for an ATT and the Review Conference on the UN PoA. Germany would like to join other delegations in welcoming Ambassador Moritán today at the current session of the First Committee in his capacity as the Chairman of the Arms Trade Treaty Preparatory Committee.

Germany fully supports the ATT process and would like to congratulate Ambassador Moritán for so ably leading it. We continue to believe that the establishment of a universal, legally binding and robust Arms Trade Treaty regulating the global trade in conventional arms will tangibly contribute to the enhancement of international peace and security. We will spare no efforts to achieve agreement within the United Nations on such a new international instrument.

Mr Chairman,

Together with its EU partners, Germany continues to actively contribute to the preparatory process leading to the 2012 UN Conference, mandated to elaborate a legally binding and universal Arms Trade Treaty. We will continue to do so throughout the complete negotiating process. We have noted with great satisfaction the high level of engagement of all delegations in the various sessions of the Preparatory Committee, and in particular of its latest July 2011 session. We consider that the Preparatory Committee is well on its way to deliver what it has been mandated to do, that is to make recommendations to the 2012 United Nations Conference on the elements that would be needed to attain an effective and balanced ATT and would urge all States to further strive for such recommendations to be prepared. We would like to see these recommendations included in the report that the PrepCom should submit to the 2012 Conference. They should set the scene, without prejudging, for the proper negotiations due to start in 2012 at the UN Conference.

The draft paper proposed by Ambassador Moritán has been subject to continued improvements at each session of the PrepCom. Its latest version is more comprehensive and it is certainly characterized by its improved coherence and clarity. At the same time - as is natural at this stage of the process - the draft paper needs to be further refined. Let me mention here a few examples:

References to transfers and different types of transfers should be spelled out in a consistent yet differentiated way throughout the paper, including language that details the depth of controls on each of them with a very strong focus on export controls. Controls on other types of transfers need to be considered very carefully and in an adequately differentiated manner. The difference between national information collection and international reporting should be further developed. We also need to clearly define the terms used, including types of military equipment envisaged to be subject to the treaty. Finally, we also consider that provisions on victim assistance are not appropriate, as we do not
see them having a role in a treaty on arms transfer controls such as the Arms Trade Treaty, which is not a treaty on prohibitions.

Germany strongly welcomes that the set of criteria included in the current paper is in line with the mandate of the ATT PrepCom: that is to elaborate the highest possible international standards for arms transfers. We further welcome the inclusion of SALW within the scope of this paper, they need to be included without exception, alongside ammunitions and munitions.

Let me express once again our highest appreciation for the way Ambassador Moritán continues to guide this process. Against the background of the progress achieved so far and the very positive atmosphere preserved in consultations to date, we cannot but continue to support his chairmanship through to the successful conclusion of the negotiating process in 2012.

Mr Chairman,

On the Review Conference on the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Germany strongly supports a pro-active approach to this conference. During the last ten years, the Programme of Action has been the reference document in the field of Small Arms and Light Weapons control. Today it is indeed time for a reconsideration of what has been achieved and what is still to be done. The UN PoA has certainly been able to contribute to awareness regarding the challenges and dangers posed by uncontrolled SALW proliferation. It has led to new regional arrangements and in some cases to the meaningful reduction of surplus weapons and ammunition. However, when it comes to the implementation of the programme's provisions, there is need for improvement. Germany stands ready to participate in the strengthening of the PoA in a spirit of cooperation and assistance. After 10 years, the challenge will be to include additional issues related to the proliferation of SALW in the broader context of human rights and conflict prevention – in particular gender issues, the protection of children against armed violence and social and economic aspects of SALW proliferation and its relation to conflict prevention.

Mr Chairman,

Germany looks forward to the 4th CCW Review Conference in Geneva in November 2011. A successful Review Conference will review, clarify and strengthen the existing obligations and their implementation. It should also set perspectives for useful future work. The ongoing negotiations on a CCW protocol on cluster munitions should lead to substantial improvements on the ground which should be compatible with and complementary to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. A new instrument needs to make a significant humanitarian contribution, containing an immediate prohibition on the use, production or transfer of cluster munitions.

Mr Chairman,
I have now the honour to introduce two draft resolutions tabled by Germany together with partners:

With Romania, Germany proposes its biennial resolution L.35 entitled "Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures."

Together with France, Germany introduces resolution L.36 on “Problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus”.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank in particular those states who, for the first time, have co-sponsored our resolutions this year and brought up the number of co-sponsors in both cases to more than 50 so far. Let me encourage those delegations who are still considering co-sponsoring to do so. We hope that – like in 2009 – both draft resolutions will be adopted by consensus.

Mr Chairman,

I would like to thank my colleague Ambassador Wunderlich, the Chairman of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) for the further development of the Standardized Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures, for introducing the outcome of the GGE and congratulate him on its achievements.

The international reporting mechanism achieved remarkable success over many years. However, persistent shortcomings and a gradual decline in reporting made improvements necessary. It was against this background that, in 2007, in response to a joint German/Romanian proposal, a GGE was tasked by resolution 62/13 to review the operation and further development of the Standardized Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures.

This draft German/ Romanian biennial resolution contains a number of new elements reflecting the work and recommendations of the GGE. The GGE worked comprehensively in three sessions in 2010 and 2011. Its well-considered conclusions and recommendations were developed with a view to enabling the broadest possible participation in military expenditures reporting. The Group’s consensus report was submitted to the General Assembly in Document A/66/89 on 14 June, 2011.

This year’s draft resolution welcomes the successful outcome of the GGE and endorses the report and the recommendations as well as the new and simplified name of the instrument, i.e. “UN Report on Military Expenditures”. It calls upon Member States to make use of the new and simplified reporting forms and formats. The draft resolution reflects the common understanding for the purposes of this instrument that “military expenditures” refers to all financial resources that a State spends on the uses and functions of its military forces, and "information on military expenditures" represents an actual outlay in current prices and domestic currency. The draft resolution also encourages further cooperation with relevant regional organizations with a view to raise awareness of the instrument and recommends to establish a process for periodic reviews.
The resolution encourages the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs – and here I would like to express my gratitude to the Office – to continue to improve, with financial and technical support of interested States, the existing UNODA database with a view to making it more user-friendly, up-to-date and functional.

The very concrete and practical recommendations of the GGE will, once endorsed, make the instrument more user-friendly and more relevant to today’s changing world. Reporting on global military expenditures could benefit from the GGE’s recommendations as early as 2012.

In his foreword to the GGE report, the Secretary General underlined the instrument’s potential to contribute tangibly to peace and security and expressed his hope that it could also contribute to freeing up resources for economic and social development. In this perspective the resolution contains a new and final preambular paragraph referring to Article 26 of the Charter of the UN which calls for the promotion of “the establishment and maintainance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world’s human and economic resources.”

Let me appeal to all delegations to join in co-sponsoring the resolution, thus giving an important impetus to its expanded implementation. Germany and Romania are convinced that Member States will show their commitment to the common goal of global transparency and trust by once again adopting this resolution without a vote.

Mr Chairman,

The second draft resolution I will introduce regards the proper management of surplus ammunition.

Conventional ammunition stockpiles can, when becoming unstable, pose a serious threat to public safety by the risk of explosion or contamination. They also increase the possibility of diversion to illicit use, fueling criminal use or armed violence and possibly undermining arms embargoes and sanctions. States that do not effectively manage their national stockpiles risk to be unable to monitor the quality and quantity of the conventional ammunition stored. Several serious accidents and explosions at ammunition storage sites in the last few years causing destruction and death and endangering the local population have sadly proven the continued relevance of the issue.

France and Germany presented a first draft resolution on surplus ammunition in 2005 and have tabled the resolution again several times since to highlight the importance and urgency of this issue.

As a consequence of the recommendations of the 2006 resolution, a GGE worked out a set of recommendations to assist states in the reduction and destruction of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus. One core recommendation was the establishment of Technical Guidelines for the stockpile management of conventional ammunition. These guidelines were to be made available for States to be used to avoid excess accumulation of ammunition on a voluntary basis.
I am very pleased to confirm the completion of the Technical Guidelines by the Technical Review Panel — a group of experts seconded by States particularly committed to the issue — at the end of last month. Germany was among those states contributing with technical expertise and with substantial funding. The draft presented today reflects the outcome of this effort and commends the work of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs as well as the United Nations Mine Action Service who have contributed with their expertise to the establishment of the Guidelines and the UN SaferGuard knowledge resource management programme associated with them. Moreover, the draft resolution "encourages states wishing to improve their ammunition stockpile management ... to contact the UN SaferGuard programme ... with a view to develop cooperation including, where relevant, the provision of technical expertise."

Our last resolution on surplus ammunition in 2009 endorsed the work of the GGE recommending the development of the said Technical Guidelines. It was adopted by the General Assembly by consensus. This year's draft acknowledges the success of the implementation of the GGE's recommendations. In conclusion, the 2011 draft is a straight-forward follow-up to the 2009 resolution, reflecting the progress being made since in technical amendments. We are confident that this draft will also be adopted without a vote.

Thank you for your attention.