EU Statement
on
"Conventional Weapons"

By

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at the

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- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -
Mr Chairman,

I speak on behalf of the European Union. The Acceding country Croatia*, the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Iceland* and Serbia*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the EFTA country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova and Armenia, align themselves with this statement.

1. The last few months have been marked by important events in the field of conventional weapons: the Diplomatic Conference on an Arms Trade Treaty and the Second Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. The EU is convinced that in these processes, which are mutually reinforcing, we are witnessing a remarkable momentum that we cannot afford to miss.

Mr Chairman,

2. The UN Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty held in this room last July did not manage to find agreement on a final text of the Treaty. This is regrettable as we sought to conclude a strong, robust, and effective ATT that would reduce the suffering caused by poorly regulated trade in conventional arms. At the same time, we must recognize that tremendous progress has been achieved during the four weeks of negotiations of this summer. The latest draft of the Treaty text presented by the President of the Conference on 26 July 2012 represents the very solid basis on which our work must be completed.

3. We are firmly convinced that agreement on an Arms Trade Treaty remains within our reach and that the international community should not lose time to complete its negotiations. After six years of consultations and negotiations, the ATT process is ripe for conclusion. We look forward to the deliberations of this session of the UN GA to define the last stage of the negotiating process. We fully support the convening of a final shorter UN Conference on the ATT in early 2013, functioning under the same rules of the July 2012 one, that shall conclude negotiations on the Treaty on the basis of the President's draft text of 26 July 2012.

4. In the view of the EU, the Arms Trade Treaty that the international community should agree upon, should be a meaningful and effective and legally binding international instrument aiming at regulating the international legal trade in conventional arms, while combating the illicit trafficking, thus reducing human suffering and improving international peace, security, and stability. To this end, we continue to stress the importance of including strong transfer criteria in the Treaty that would, inter alia, ensure that arms are not transferred if there is a clear risk that they could be used in serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights. The ATT should cover all types of conventional arms, including SALW and all types of munitions, and transfers, and include a credible, obligatory, and public reporting

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* Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
* Iceland continues to be a member of EFTA and the European Economic Area.
mechanism in order to enhance transparency and accountably in the global arms trade. The Treaty should also be open to regional integration organizations in order to fully recognize their role in regulating international transfers of conventional weapons.

5. The EU fully appreciates the importance of the widest participation in the ATT negotiating process, in order to ensure the universality of the treaty, maximum ownership of this instrument, and engagement of all stakeholders, in its future implementation. Following the successful organization of a series of world-wide outreach events sponsored by the EU in cooperation with UNIDIR over the past three years, the European Union shall stand ready to support the implementation and universalization of the Treaty.

Mr Chairman,

6. Eleven years after the adoption of the UN Programme of Action, the EU strongly shares the view that the illicit trade in SALW still constitutes a huge impediment for peace and security, growth, development and safety in the world. We have not yet achieved the common goals that we set ourselves in 2001 to reduce the death and suffering caused by the illicit trade in SALW. The EU continues to consider this international instrument as the key universal starting point to respond to the challenges posed by the illicit trade and excessive accumulation of SALW at national, regional, and global levels. We are confident that the successful outcome of the Review Conference will enable us to do so more effectively in the future.

7. The EU is very pleased that the Review Conference agreed on a renewed commitment to the implementation of the PoA, that it adopted a significant Outcome document by consensus and that it took important decisions to further improve the UN PoA and speed up its implementation. At the same time, we recognize that there are still important improvements to PoA that couldn't be made this time, and that we will continue to work towards in the future. Technological progress and political developments of the last decade and the evolution of the PoA in view of future challenges as well as the integration of ammunition and the gender perspective remain important tasks to be tackled.

8. We believe that real progress has been made as regards the effective implementation of the International Tracing Instrument, inter alia by the increased exchange of tracing results. Furthermore, we have achieved a strong commitment to increased levels of technical and financial assistance, information-sharing, and a better integration of the specific role of women. We also took important steps forward on the issue of diversion of SALW, the use of Interpol's tools, the linkages with the Protocol against Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, and on actually ensuring that international transfers of SALW are duly authorized by Governments according to strict national regulations and procedures that are consistent with the existing responsibilities of States under relevant international law. Moreover, consensus was reached on a schedule of meetings that will further enhance the coherence, effectiveness and continuity of the PoA and ITI implementation process. Finally, the EU is also looking forward to the initial report by the
Secretary-General on recent technical developments in SALW manufacturing, technology and design for effective marking, record-keeping and tracing.

9. The EU remains strongly committed to fighting the spread and misuse of SALW around the world. It continues to support third States and regional organizations in their implementation of the UN Programme of Action as well as other relevant instruments, such as the International Marking and Tracing Instrument and the UN Firearms Protocol. Regional cooperation remains a key aspect in the achievement of sustainable results in addition to national efforts. Moreover, specific projects are also being implemented to support third countries' efforts to dispose of their SALW and ammunition surpluses and to improve their stockpile management, including marking and record keeping. The EU also supports the elaboration of innovative tools and practices to prevent the illicit trade of SALW, in particular via air.

10. The EU reiterates its strong support for the UN Register on Conventional Arms and believes that SALW should constitute a mandatory category of the Register.

Mr Chairman,

11. The European Union has always supported international efforts addressing the considerable negative security, humanitarian, socio-economic impact of certain conventional weapons and their indiscriminate use against civilian populations.

12. We welcome the significant progress achieved in the universalisation and implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction. The last Review Conference and the Cartagena Action Plan gave renewed impetus to our common efforts to reach all the objectives of the Convention, including a world free from anti-personnel mines.

13. Significant progress has been achieved in the implementation of the Convention, but much remains to be done. The financial and political support provided by the EU and its Member States individually to mine action in almost all affected countries and regions of the world has been substantial. It clearly illustrates our continuous commitment towards the goal of a world free of anti-personnel mines and other explosive remnants.

14. The European Union is aware of the complexity of the tasks involved and the need to ensure effective and efficient delivery of aid. We will continue to work in close cooperation with the countries concerned and provide, where possible, assistance to address the significant remaining challenges. Our support is focusing on the promotion of the universality of the Convention, assistance to State Parties in complying with their obligations, including stockpile destruction, clearing mined areas, risk education and assisting victims. For the European Union victim assistance is a core component of mine action and there is also a clear commitment to strengthening care rehabilitation and socio-economic reintegration of victims.
15. The European Union supports the humanitarian goal of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The EU takes note of, the significant progress made in this area and the growing number of ratifications and accessions to the Convention. Nonetheless, much remains to be done, also to include the world’s largest possessors and manufacturers in the ongoing efforts. We also take note of the Oslo Progress Report adopted at the annual Meeting of States Parties in Oslo, in September 2012. It is to be noted that the European Union, like many donors, in providing assistance does not differentiate between the types of explosive remnants and that European Union Mine Action includes all explosive remnants of war, not least cluster munitions remnants.

Mr Chairman,

16. With a view of strengthening international humanitarian law, the EU remains firmly committed to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and its Protocols. They constitute an essential part of international humanitarian law which contributes to both preventing and reducing the suffering of civilians and combatants. Their universality and the fulfilment of the intended objectives as adopted in the 4th Review Conference last November and reflected in the Final Declaration remain a priority objective for the European Union. In particular, the EU welcomes continued developments in the implementation of CCW Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War which encourage us to continue with our efforts towards universalization.

17. The European Union welcomes the discussion held on the implementation of International Humanitarian law with regard to Mines Other than Anti-Personnel Mines at an open ended Meeting of Experts in April 2012, as decided at the 4th Review Conference of the CCW. In this framework, the humanitarian, developmental and economic concerns posed by the irresponsible use of those weapons remain important issues.

18. While recognizing the sovereign right of States to be bound only by the Treaties to which they have acceded to, the European Union supports the development of synergies in the implementation of international humanitarian disarmament instruments, as applicable.

We also believe that the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provides a framework to address the needs of survivors, realization of their human rights and to ensure respect for their dignity.

Mr Chairman,

19. The exchange of information on national legislation, regulations and procedures on the transfer of arms, military equipment, dual use goods and technology contributes to mutual
understanding and confidence among States. Such transparency is also beneficial to States that are in the process of developing legislation on these transfers.

20. The EU reiterates its strong support for the UN Register of Conventional Arms and encourages all UN MS to regularly report to it. We look forward to the works of the Group of Governmental Experts, established by UN General Assembly Resolution 66/39 that should submit its recommendation to the 68th session of the UN GA. We urge all UN Member States to positively consider the inclusion of a separate category on small arms and light weapons in the Register in order to make it more comprehensive and relevant to all States.

21. Transparency in the field of military expenditure is another key element in building trust between States and preventing conflict. The increase in global military expenditure in the last decade emphasizes the need for an effective UN mechanism for reporting such expenditure. We express full support for the UN Report on Military Expenditure and encourage all UN MS to regularly report to it in accordance with the recommendations drafted by the GGE in 2011 and endorsed by this forum last year.

Mr Chairman,

22. Let me conclude by stressing once again the importance of continuing to contribute to the development of a credible, effective, and meaningful international treaty system in the field of conventional weapons. International action continues to be needed to address the challenges and risks posed by the misuse and poorly regulated and illicit trade in conventional arms.

Thank you.