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Thematic discussion on conventional weapons

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Mr Chair,

The Norwegian government is strongly committed to humanitarian disarmament as well as to developing strict measures to curb irresponsible and illicit arms trade. Strengthened efforts in these areas will contribute to the reduction and prevention of armed violence, and thereby human suffering. In addition, we believe that humanitarian disarmament and the prevention of armed violence are vital to improving the national and global security environment and development. We cannot allow these important issues to continue to be deferred by deadlocks and procedural snags. Our credibility is at stake.

Mr Chair,

The Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions demonstrate that it is possible to negotiate multilateral instruments within the field of disarmament that have an immediate humanitarian effect on the ground and that strengthen the protection of civilians. This is possible when there is a common sense of purpose across traditional groupings, when our work builds on the facts and realities on the ground, and when the representatives of states recognise, acknowledge and make use of the undisputed expertise and competence of humanitarian organisations. Norway gives high priority to the implementation of the Mine Ban Convention to ensure that mined areas are cleared and victims’ rights are improved. The Convention has been a success: vast land has been cleared, there are fewer victims every year and millions of stockpiled mines have been destroyed, but the job is still not finished.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions has also generated similar results, millions of deadly sub-munitions have been destroyed since this convention entered into force. During Norway’s Presidency of the Convention on Cluster Munitions we will continue to focus on effective implementation of the Convention’s obligations on the ground as well as universalization of the Convention and its norms. Let me in this regard underline that the States Parties have made a joint commitment to condemn all use of

(Check against delivery)
cluster munitions. The Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs has condemned the recent use of cluster munitions by Syrian armed forces and urged Syrian authorities to immediately stop the use of these indiscriminate weapons and conduct emergency clearance to protect the civilian population.

Mr. Chair,

Let me briefly touch upon the question of use of depleted uranium in ammunition and armour. We know that there are concerns caused by worrying signs of health and environmental implications in areas where depleted uranium ammunition and armour have been employed. While no clear conclusions can be drawn and further research is needed we feel that these concerns warrant our serious attention. To be on the safe side restraint should be performed concerning the use of depleted uranium in ammunition and armour. Norway supports research to bring more knowledge to this field.

Mr Chair,

In September, the Second Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons succeeded in adopting a set of documents which will guide our work in this area in the coming years. Norway welcomes this, but at the same time we would like to point out that we argued for a stronger outcome. Many label small arms and light weapons with its ammunition as the weapons of mass destruction of our time. It is therefore urgent that the Programme of Action is implemented fully and ambitiously by all states in order to make the PoA the efficient instrument against armed violence and human suffering it was meant to be. Norway has long argued that the PoA should be converted into a legal instrument. This is still our view. Norway look forwards towards participating in the implementation of the PoA and the outcome documents from this year’s Review Conference.

Mr. Chair,

In July, we were unable to finish and adopt an Arms Trade Treaty. This was disappointing. The world urgently needs a set of internationally legally binding rules that prevent irresponsible and illicit arms trade causing human suffering and armed violence, including violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. Some progress was made during the ATT conference in July. We have the chair’s draft treaty text of 26 July, which should be the basis for our work next year. However, my delegation underlines that the 26 July draft was a result of difficult compromises, which some countries could not accept at the end. This draft represents a floor that requires improvements of both substantive and technical nature. In other words, our work next year can only proceed in one direction from this point of departure: Towards a stronger and more robust treaty based on humanitarian values and with a comprehensive scope and strong and binding criteria.

The ATT resolution that now has been tabled proposes a two weeks conference in March 2013. Norway supports that. Concerning the rules of procedure and the consensus principle, our scepticism should be well known. Norway attaches great importance to the adoption of an Arms Trade Treaty, and we want it to be as universal as possible. We are willing to accept the same rules of procedure for the conference next year, as a last attempt. But to get to a strong and robust Arms Trade Treaty more flexibility will be required from some states. Norway intends to contribute constructively in the process towards finalizing a strong and robust ATT in 2013.

Thank you Mr. Chair