THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND

STATEMENT ON CONVENTIONAL
WEAPONS

By

Ambassador Joanne Adamson

UK Head of Delegation
to the
67 UNGA First Committee

New York, 23 October 2012

Please check against delivery
Mr Chairman,

First Committee gives the UN Membership the opportunity to both reflect on the year that has passed and look forward to the year to come. My fervent wish is that next year we can look back on 2012 as a defining year in our mission to secure an Arms Trade Treaty; the year that discussions became negotiations and words became Treaty text. And when we look forward, we face a new and welcome challenge; the challenge of implementing a robust and effective ATT that will save lives and protect our citizens.

I sincerely believe that 2012 is that defining year. The Conference in July achieved a great deal, and that would not have been possible without the positive and constructive engagement of the UN Membership. The negotiations were not always easy, nothing worthwhile ever is, but they were characterised by a drive and determination to achieve the goal we have been working towards for so long.

At the end of July I said that an ATT was coming. UN First Committee, I hope, will take us another step closer. The Co-Authors have tabled a Resolution that will set the timing and modalities for a further conference in March 2013 at which we can finalise our work. Many of you helped to shape the Resolution and for that we thank you.

We are nearly there. The President’s draft text of 26 July provides a strong basis for our work. But a small amount of additional work would make it more coherent and more effective. The conference will give us the opportunity to undertake this work, and undertake it in an open and transparent way amongst the whole UN Membership. An ATT will bring benefits for all states, and we want all states to be involved in its implementation.

Mr Chairman,

The ATT has taken much of our focus, but there have been other achievements that it is important to recognise.

The work to prevent and eradicate the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons through the UN Programme of Action remains a vital component of our work to tackle the problems caused by the unfettered proliferation of conventional
arms. We very much welcome the successful outcome of this year's review conference. We managed to secure:

— The recognition that small arms and light weapons can be used to undermine human rights laws;
— Improvements to the implementation of the International Tracing Instrument to promote international co-operation in marking and tracing illicit SALW;
— The creation of a voluntary sponsorship fund to provide assistance to States on SALW issues.

Considerable thanks should go to our Chair, Joy Ogwu, who led the process so effectively and in such an inclusive manner.

Mr Chairman,

This year also saw the Meeting of State Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions return to Oslo, Norway, where 5 years ago the first decisive steps were taken towards a Convention that has flourished into a community of countries who have taken the bold step to prohibit these indiscriminate weapons, destroy their stockpiles and remove their devastating humanitarian legacy.

And the need to rid the world of these weapons is as strong today as it has ever been. Recent reports about the use of cluster munitions by the Syrian Regime against its own population are extremely concerning. The Syrian government has a responsibility to fully adhere to their obligations under applicable international law, and to protect its people from the devastating effect of these and other indiscriminate attacks.

We call on all UN member states that have not done so, to join the Convention on Cluster Munitions without delay.
Mr Chairman,

The UK remains committed to supporting those countries blighted by the legacy of cluster munitions and landmines. The UK’s Mine action programme of assistance forms an important element of our broader commitment to reach the target of spending 0.7% of gross national income on Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) by 2013. Despite the difficult global economic climate, the UK remains firmly on track to meet this target.

The UK allocates more than £30 million to its three-year international mine action programme across 8 countries. Additional to this programme, we are providing £10 million, over 5 years to mine action in Afghanistan. The UK is also able to respond to emerging concerns and has provided significant financial and expert support for priority mine action in Libya.

Mr Chairman,

None of these national or international efforts in isolation are a panacea for the world’s ills. They are individual measures and steps that have been slowly built up into a global response to the problems that we face. For years, a crucial piece of our international architecture has been missing. Next year we can put that right through the adoption of a robust and effective, broadly supported Arms Trade Treaty. A Treaty that can knit together our individual efforts into something that is greater than the sum of its parts.

It is time for us to join together for one final push: States, civil society and industry working together towards a single aim. Our dream has become a tangible reality that the international community must now grasp.

Thank you Mr Chairman.