STATEMENT ON CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS

by

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Mr Chair / Madam Chair,

At the outset allow me to align my comments with the statement delivered by the European Union. I'm delivering an abridged version due to time constraints, the full version of which will be posted online.

Mr Chair / Madam Chair,

This has been a momentous year for international action on conventional arms control. In August this year, Mexico hosted the First Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty. Hopes and expectations for this Conference were high and we are delighted that the Conference was successful, under Mexican chairmanship, in laying the foundations for effective operational support of the Arms Trade Treaty. As one of the Vice Chairmen of the Conference, the United Kingdom was proud to have played its part.

One of the key decisions taken at CSP1 was the selection of the seat of the Treaty Secretariat. The UK considers the choice of Geneva as particularly fitting, given the wealth of relevant expertise located there. We know that Switzerland will make every effort to enable the Treaty to live up to the ambitions invested in it.

The UK looks forward to an effective Extraordinary Conference of States Parties early next year to finalise budgetary and administrative arrangements.

Mr Chairman / Madam Chair,

Our ambitions for the Arms Trade Treaty should focus on the potential of the Treaty to enhance peace, security and prosperity. Full
universalisation and effective implementation of the Treaty are paramount to this.

We continue to offer technical expertise and financial assistance, where possible, to States looking to accede to the Treaty and develop their export control systems. Over the past year the UK funded £350,000-worth of projects in support of ATT implementation through the Foreign & Commonwealth Office's Counter Proliferation Programme Fund, with projects focused specifically on ratification, accession, and effective implementation.

The UK encourages all States here, which have not yet done so, to accede to the Arms Trade Treaty as soon as possible. The world's first legally binding Treaty regulating the trade in conventional arms is now in force, proving how much we can achieve when we work together and co-operate.

Mr Chairman,

The misuse of Small Arms and Light Weapons, fuelled by their illicit trade, is responsible for more human rights violations and other heinous crimes than any other type of weaponry. The UN PoA remains a vital tool in our efforts to address this and to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in SALW. The UK continues to believe that the UN PoA should maintain its relevance as an important instrument in its own right. We thank our Finnish colleagues, the Mines Advisory Group and the Small Arms Survey who joined us in leading a side event at MGE2 to explore synergies between the ATT and the UN PoA, and hope that this opened a constructive dialogue between the two instruments.

Mr/Madam Chair,
The UK remains committed to the humanitarian goals of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and played an active role in its First Review Conference in Dubrovnik in September this year, where an ambitious work plan was agreed for the coming five years. The Plan rightly addresses every area of the Convention’s work for the implementation of the Convention. The UK wants to see the Convention on Cluster Munitions become universal and actively encourages States to accede to the Convention, including at Ministerial level.

The UK also supports the Anti Personnel Mine Ban Convention and continues to support the fundamental humanitarian goal of this Treaty to end the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines.

For over 20 years, the UK has supported some of the worst-affected countries around the world to clear landmines and explosive remnants of war after conflict. The UK’s funding in this area from March 2014-2015 totalled some 8.4 million pounds (that is 12.2 million US dollars). The UK prioritises funding to countries affected by cluster munitions, mines and other explosive remnants of war where the needs are greatest. Its assistance has benefitted seven countries in 2014-15 - Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Mozambique, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Iraq.

Just as its aid focuses on repairing the legacy of past conflicts, the UK is ready and willing to discuss potential future challenges. For that reason the UK took part in the productive informal meeting of experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems in April this year at the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). We thank Germany, and Ambassador Biontino in particular, for leading the discussions. This important issue sits well within the remit of the CCW and we support continuing in this vein next year. Thank You.