CZECH REPUBLIC

Statement by

Mr. Václav Bálek
Head of Unit for Disarmament and Non-proliferation
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic

at the Thematic Discussion on Conventional Weapons
of the First Committee of the 71st Session
of the General Assembly of the United Nations

New York, 21 October 2016
Mr. Chairman,

The Czech Republic fully aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union and I will limit myself only to a few points I want to add in my national capacity.

The Czech Republic welcomes the outcomes and the success of the Second Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) held in August in Geneva. The ATT is a crucial element in the development of internationally agreed standards to regulate the still poorly regulated global trade in conventional arms. As the necessary structures are in place we have to keep momentum and focus on the process of further universalisation and full implementation of the ATT. The Czech Republic is proud to have an opportunity to participate actively in the work of the Management Committee and will continue to contribute through active outreach and assistance across the globe.

The Czech Republic reiterates its strong support for the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW) that regulates the conduct of armed conflict and thus constitutes an essential part of international humanitarian law. Universality of the CCW and its Protocols remains one of the highest priorities of the Czech Republic. We look forward to the Fifth Review Conference taking place in December this year and believe in progress in discussions and even decisions on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS) and possibly on Mines other than anti-personnel mines (MOTAPM).

The Czech Republic welcomes the substantial progress achieved since the last Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction (Ottawa Convention). 15th Meeting of the States Parties in Santiago this November will provide us with a great opportunity to evaluate progress and challenges especially in decontamination and victim assistance and to discuss priorities in achievement of Convention’s goals.

The First Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) held in Dubrovnik in 2015 proved and highlighted once again noble goals of the Convention – prohibition of use, production, stockpiling and transfer of the cluster munitions, clearance of contaminated land, destruction of stockpiles and victim assistance. We confirm our commitments and readiness to help with its swift application and in this context very much
welcome just recently formulated ambition of States Parties to implement their obligations stemming from the Convention before 2030.

Each year small arms and light weapons (SALW), and their ammunition cause the death and injure hundreds of thousands of people, including women and children. Their illicit trade and excessive accumulation adversely affect regional and international security and stability. SALW can contribute to terrorism and organised crime, and are a major factor in triggering and spreading conflicts, as well as in the collapse of State structures. The Czech Republic remains committed to working with all UN Member States in addressing these challenges within the framework of the 2001 UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in SALW in All Its Aspects. At the same time, the Czech Republic continues to support measures to ensure adequate marking of and record keeping for SALW and to strengthen cooperation in tracing illicit SALW.

Thank you for your attention.