Statement on behalf of the Delegation of the Republic of Latvia

Thematic debate on Conventional Weapons

First Committee of the 73rd UN General Assembly

New York, October 2018

Mr. President,

The Latvian delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union and would like to add some remarks in a national capacity.

At the beginning of the 20th century, combatants accounted for 90% of conflict related casualties. Today, 90% of casualties in armed conflicts are civilians. Conventional arms kill around 500 thousand people per year, out of which 70 thousand are killed in conflict zones. These figures clearly prove that the international community must focus not only on weapons of mass destruction but also on conventional arms. In this respect, Latvia welcomes the UN Secretary General Agenda for Disarmament that underlines amongst other importance of disarmament in the area of conventional arms.

A number of international agreements address different conventional arms systems and their use. The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), Ottawa convention, Convention on Cluster Munitions, just to mention few, and the Arms Trade Treaty which is the latest addition to this list.

Latvia ratified the Arms Trade Treaty on 2 April 2014, exactly one year after adoption of the UN resolution, thus contributing to the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty at the end of 2014. Successful implementation of the Treaty at the national level has been a priority of the Latvian government. A wide spectrum of measures and activities were put in place to maintain the highest possible standards in control of trade with conventional arms at a national level. Higher standards of responsibility and traceability in the transfer of defense products have been achieved. Today we are willing to share our experience in order to assist other countries on their way to develop effective and internationally recognized arms export control systems.

With that in mind Latvia assumed the Presidency of the Arms Trade Treaty on 24 August 2018 for one year and will spare no effort to promote effective implementation of the treaty and its universalization. The fourth Conference of States Parties set an ambitious agenda for intersessional activities. Additionally, Latvia’s presidency will focus on gender, and arms related gender based violence as a priority theme. We call on all interested States and stakeholders to contribute towards this priority in every possible
way. We recognize the important contribution of civil society towards the effective implementation and universalization of the Treaty, and will actively promote continued cooperation.

Latvia considers that universalization of the Treaty is a key to a world without violence caused by illegal circulation of arms. We should advocate for the ATT in those 59 countries that haven’t yet joined the Treaty and promote it in those parts of the world that are under-represented, especially Asia and Greater Middle East.

We welcome Suriname and Guinea-Bissau to the family of the States parties as its 98th and 99th members. We also congratulate the Parliament of Lebanon on ratification of the Treaty and hope that the President will sign the ratification law as soon as feasible.

Equally, Latvia is concerned with the high level of outstanding national assessed contributions. The effectiveness of the Treaty depends on the availability of resources to carry out its mandated activities. Non-payment or delayed payment of contributions seriously hamper normal functioning of not only the ATT Secretariat’s daily work but also the Treaty as a whole. Such a situation is not acceptable. Latvia calls on all member states to fulfil their obligations towards ATT and pay assessed contributions in time and in full.

As the Presidency of ATT this year Latvia presented the draft resolution on ATT to this Committee. The draft is currently supported by 80 sponsors and we hope that this number will grow prior to the adoption of the Resolution. This year substantive accents have been put on prevention of diversion of conventional arms and ammunition to unauthorized end uses and end users as well as on ensuring the full and equal participation of women and men, in pursuing the object and purpose of the Treaty and its implementation. I hope that the resolution will enjoy growing support of this Committee.

Mr. President,

Regrettably arrears in payment of assessed contributions affects activities not only of ATT. The CCW meeting of High Contracting Parties that Latvia currently chairs will examine additional measures that could be deployed to resolve cash flow challenges and reinstate permanent secretarial support that has been interrupted due to financial shortfalls.

Mr. President

Let me conclude by reiterating our delegation’s support to your efforts in steering the work of this Committee to a successful outcome.