Statement delivered by

Ms. Pichamonch Pintola,
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to the United Nations

at the Thematic Discussion on Conventional Weapons
of the First Committee, Seventy-Third Session
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Mr. Chair,

1. Thailand aligns itself with the statements delivered by the distinguished representatives on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

2. Disarmament saves lives. Nowhere else do these three words resonate more clearly than in this First Committee thematic discussion on conventional weapons. But there is an even more compelling argument for putting these words into action.

Mr. Chair,

3. The illicit trade and proliferation of conventional weapons pose a serious threat to global security. Its direct and gendered impact, especially on women and children, acutely hinder the attainment of sustainable peace, development and prosperity.

4. Thailand is one of the countries affected by unexploded remnants of war, and we are working with all stakeholders to rid the country of mines. At present, eighty-six (86) percent of mine-clearance work in Thailand has been completed. Seventeen (17) of the twenty-seven (27) affected provinces have been declared mine-free. While the numbers are not significant, what is even more meaningful is the fact that the recently released lands now benefit people’s livelihoods and advance the economic prosperity of Thais, facilitating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

5. But this endeavor cannot be a solitary one. International cooperation is a pivotal and important enabler for success in these efforts. We can and must do more, together. Thailand is a member of the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance of the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention, and we are working to promote assistance and cooperation among State Parties and stakeholders in order to fulfill all the obligations under the Treaty, including victim assistance and rehabilitation, and mine risk education.

Mr. Chair,

6. It remains abundantly clear that the proliferation and illicit transfer of conventional weapons pose a grave threat to States and human security, sustainable peace, justice and development. It is estimated that approximately four to five hundred thousand (4-500,000) civilians succumb every year to illicit small arms and light weapons. These numbers may even be conservative estimates, rendering these weapons the ‘real weapons of mass destruction’.
7. It also remains poignantly clear that States with the least capacity to deal with illicit arms are often the most affected. This is the world we live in and these are the issues we must confront head on.

8. International cooperation and assistance are vital to ensuring that disarmament saves lives. Also, catering to context specific threats and regional cooperation adds value to our effort. For Thailand, the UN Programme of Action (PoA) on Small Arms and Light Weapons remains the primary framework to address the widespread and uncontrolled availability of illicit small arms and light weapons. As a Signatory State to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), we believe that the Treaty complements the ongoing efforts under the PoA in ensuring that illicit flow of conventional arms is effectively regulated.

Mr. Chair,

9. We have consistently heard from colleagues in the Committee that new technologies, including drones and other lethal autonomous weapons (LAWs), have wide and understudied implications. Thailand could not agree more and we reiterate that in our growing understanding of these new technologies, we have to underscore the importance of respecting and evolving international humanitarian law. On-going discussions on new technologies and weapons should be based on codifying current practices and ensuring progressive development in appropriate international fora.

Mr. Chair,

10. Our work on conventional weapons can save hundreds of thousands of lives and improve the quality of life for many more. Like any other weapon, funds that are set aside for conventional weapons can be allocated away from armaments and into poverty reduction, universal health care and other important goals, all of which can contribute to the prosperity of our people. We need to change mindsets and continue to seek out more collaboration, not only among States but with civil society organizations and local communities. You can count on Thailand to be a partner in this endeavor.

I thank you.