High Level Panel on Gender and Gender-Based Violence  
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Excellencies, Colleagues,

I now welcome you to the High Level Panel on Gender and Gender-Based Violence. I am delighted that we have a very distinguished panel to discuss this topic.

When I proposed a President’s Draft Decision Paper at the first Preparatory Meeting for the CSP, I did so with the aim of achieving concrete actions to advance this aspect of our ATT work. This is both because this topic is an important one for Latvia, and because it is important within the ATT. As we all know, the ATT was the first Treaty to include the term gender based violence, and to make this explicit link between GBV and the tools of violence. It has enabled us to focus on issues of substance in Treaty implementation.

I have been very encouraged throughout the year by the positive engagement of delegations on this topic, and your support and suggestions around the ideas suggested. If we are able to adopt the Draft Decision, then we will have the first inter-governmental agreement on implementation of the GBV criteria of the ATT, which will be a very positive step forward.

As you know, the Draft Decision focuses on three aspects. The first is the issue of greater gender balance and equality within delegations and ATT fora. Here, the recommendations cover both the balance within delegations, and the level of representation. If half of the room is not adequately represented at all levels, then we only have half our potential. Equality must be meaningful, and therefore include the level of representation, as well as the balance of numbers. And in order to assess progress in this area on an ongoing basis, we will need to monitor this.

Second, the issue of the gendered impact of armed violence and conflict. Through our discussions during the year, we have recognised that men and boys, women and girls are affected differently by armed violence and conflict. Better understanding of the precise nature of this, through the increased collection of data and analysis will aid our ability to respond appropriately. So States are encouraged to collect such data and make it publicly available.

And third, the specific aspect of risk assessment of gender-based violence. While GBV and violence against women and children fall under international human rights and humanitarian law, the advantage of Article 7.4 of the ATT is that it draws attention specifically to an aspect of risk assessment that has historically tended to be less focussed on, if at all. Meaningfully implementing this aspect of the Treaty could mean we take steps forward concretely in
reducing arms-related GBV, and that will enable the realisation of a core ATT goal of reducing human suffering. The recommendations include that there is ongoing sharing of state practice in risk assessment, further elaboration of some of the relevant terms within the treaty, and a voluntary training guide developed.

Some of the work that has taken place during the year has enabled us to begin to make progress in clarifying the interpretations of the language and standards entailed in these obligations with regard to GBV. There is wide support for continuing to look at gender across all aspect of the Treaty, and not only within Articles 6 and 7.

I will now introduce the High Level Panel.