THEMATIC DEBATE ON CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS

STATEMENT BY

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Madam Chairperson,

In my intervention, I will touch on the subjects of conventional weapons, CCW, and small arms and light weapons.

**Conventional Arms**

The preponderant focus on the WMD threat and now increasingly on small arms and light weapons tend to divert the international community’s attention from the regulation and reduction of conventional arms and armed forces. Conventional weapons and armaments are becoming something of a blind spot of the international community.

The Undersecretary General for Disarmament Affairs in his statement to the First Committee highlighted the threat from small arms and light weapons, landmines, sub-munitions, and artillery rockets. Overemphasis on small arms can eclipse the salience of sophisticated conventional weapons and technology being traded in huge quantities around the globe. Trade in combat aircraft, aircraft carriers, airborne and early warning and control system, missile defense, nuclear submarines and warships disrupts regional balances and escalates tensions. Such trade flourishes in a moral and legal vacuum.

In 1978, SSOD I characterized the global military expenditure as a "colossal waste of resources" and called for reduction in such spending and for reinvestment of resources into efforts to fight poverty and improve human condition.

In 2006, by comparison, global military expenditure exceeding $ 1.1 trillion is staggering – about 2.5% of world GDP or $ 173 per capita. The United Nations, mandated to maintain international peace and security, has a budget which is less than 1.5% of world’s military expenditure.

The third world countries are the "favored" destination for arms sales. New markets are being explored, created and sought after. The total value of international arms transfer agreements, during the period 2001 to 2004, was $ 131 billion. Developing countries accounted for 53.2% of all international arms deliveries.

Globalized arms production and sales ignore the grave humanitarian, political and strategic consequences of conventional weapons proliferation. Arms sellers encourage all sides in a conflict to buy more weapons. Some of them see conflict situations as a "unique selling opportunity".
Recent studies have also shown that asymmetries in conventional armaments in conflict areas propel military spending and promote insecurity.

It is therefore imperative that we pursue conventional arms control, at the lowest possible levels of armaments and military forces, in order to promote regional and international peace and security. The preservation of a balance in the defense capabilities of states at the lowest levels or armaments should be the prime objective of conventional arms control.

SSOD I gave this clear direction: Together with negotiations on nuclear disarmament measures, negotiations should be carried out on the balanced reduction of forces and of conventional armaments, based on the principle of undiminished security of the parties with a view to promoting or enhancing stability at a lower military level, taking into account the need of all states to protect their security.

We believe that conventional arms control needs to be pursued primarily in the regional and subregional contexts since most threats to peace and security arise mainly in states located in the same region or subregion.

In this regard, we can adapt and follow good practices. The value of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, a cornerstone of European security, cannot be overemphasized. States with larger military capabilities have a special responsibility in promoting such agreements for regional security.

We must step up efforts to curb excessive and destabilizing accumulation of conventional weapons as well as their uncontrolled transfers.

Conventional arms control must (a) address the root causes of insecurity, emanating from disputes, conflicts and threat perceptions and (b) seek to promote balance among regional states. We need to follow up such affirmations with concrete action:

First, the Department of Disarmament Affairs can analyze the data on arms transfers and help states develop benchmarks for conventional arms control at regional and subregional levels.

The Conventional Arms Register and the Standardized Instrument, by themselves, would not lead to limitations in arms transfers. They should be used not only for reporting but also as a means to developing a global norm towards transparency in armaments. The data extrapolated from these instruments can serve as a significant early-warning mechanism, contributing to the prevention of conflict and to restraint in arms acquisitions.

Second, the Conference on Disarmament can consider formulation of the principles that can serve as a framework for regional agreements on conventional arms control.
A stable balance of conventional forces is necessary to ensure strategic stability, particularly in the regions riven with tensions. Massive induction of sophisticated weaponry accentuates conventional asymmetries and compels greater reliance on nuclear and missile deterrence in the regions that have such capabilities.

In South Asia, we are pursuing a Strategic Restraint Regime, which has three constituents: conflict resolution; nuclear and missile restraint; and conventional balance. Even as we sustain dialogue to address outstanding issues and work towards strategic stability and nuclear risk reduction, we will continue to strive for a conventional balance at the lowest possible level of armaments. In the interest of peace and security in South Asia, there must be restraint both in the demand and the supply of conventional weapons.

**CCW Review Conference**

We look forward to a successful outcome of the Third CCW Review Conference under the leadership of Ambassador Francois Rivasseau, President-Designate. In the successive preparatory committee meetings, sufficient ground has been covered. On compliance, we should be close to resolving the residual issues. Differences remain on anti-vehicle mines (AVMs) particularly in the areas of detectability, active life, recording and removal of minefields, and categorisation of fuses and censors. We are of the view that the CCW and its five protocols adequately address humanitarian aspects of mines, including AVMs. But we look forward to working with the Coordinator on AVMs, Ambassador De Rocha Paranhos, who has brought a fresh approach to the subject.

**SALW**

We thank Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam, President of the first Review Conference on SALW, for his untiring efforts. Notwithstanding the lack of progress in producing an outcome document, the RevCon acted as a catalyst in highlighting the importance of the objectives of the UN Programme of Action. Member States remain committed to the full implementation of the PoA at the national, regional and international level. Adequate provision of financial and technical international assistance can help speed up the implementation of the PoA by developing countries.

I thank you, Madam Chairperson