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Thematic debate on conventional weapons

STATEMENT

by Ambassador Jürg Streuli
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Madame President,

Switzerland would like to take this opportunity to focus briefly on four main issues: the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects, the draft resolution “Towards an arms trade treaty: establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms”, the UN Register on Conventional Arms and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons CCW.

UN PoA

Switzerland attaches great importance to the implementation of the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects. My delegation supports a follow-up process on a global level. A biannual meeting convened no later than 2008 as mentioned in the current draft of the respective resolution is of utmost importance.

Switzerland has constantly underlined the importance of taking into account the negative effects of armed violence on development. We have organised a ministerial summit on armed violence and development in Geneva on 7 June 2006. 42 countries were represented and adopted the “Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development”. Since its adoption, the Geneva Declaration has received support from numerous other States which we see as an indication of the growing relevance of the issue to the international community. The adopted principles of the Geneva Declaration need to be transformed into concrete measures. For this purpose, a core group of 10 states is about to be constituted under the coordination of Switzerland.

My government has the intention to act on three levels:

1. on the diplomatic level: we encourage other States to join the declaration
2. on the research and knowledge building level: the linkages between armed violence and development need to be properly addressed
3. we need to integrate the issue of armed violence into development programs both by donor and recipient countries

ATT

Swiss arms control and disarmament policy seeks, inter alia, to promote predictability, openness, transparency and stability, as well as to bring the transfer of conventional arms under control through the application of multilaterally agreed principles and agreements.
With regard to the draft resolution on an arms trade treaty, I can be brief. Switzerland, as a co-sponsor of the draft resolution is prepared to contribute substantively towards an Arms Trade Treaty. We strongly support an international legally binding instrument, which establishes common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms. We are convinced that the United Nations is the adequate framework for such work. Switzerland therefore supports the establishment of a group of governmental experts commencing its work in 2008 as proposed in the current draft.

Register on Conventional Arms

Switzerland has for a long period been taking a keen interest in the question of transparency in armaments. It constitutes an important factor for building confidence and security between states.

My country supported the establishment of the UN Register of Conventional Weapons and has been actively participating since the beginning of its operation in 1993. This year’s Group of Governmental Experts, in which my country participated, was able to reach a consensus on a final report containing a number of improvements to the Register. We are particularly pleased with the agreed standardized reporting form on international transfers of small arms and light weapons as part of additional background information.

Despite relatively high reporting levels, the Group noted also that the Register’s existing scope is perceived to be more relevant to the security concerns of states in some regions than in other regions. Switzerland therefore advocated the inclusion of SALW as an eight category. Nevertheless, Switzerland still believes that increased relevance of the Register would equally produces incentives for larger participation.

Switzerland fully supports the Transparency in Armaments draft resolution of the Netherlands, endorsing the consensus recommendations of the GGE, and calls upon all Member States to actively participate in the Register.

CCW

Switzerland attaches great importance to the Convention on the Prohibition or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and its five annexed protocols. Ten years ago, a majority of States Parties agreed to convene a first Conference to consider proposals of amendments to the Convention. Today, we welcome the fact that States Parties have succeeded in making the Convention a dynamic instrument capable of continuous adaptation to the development of conventional weapons used in modern warfare. Indeed, since 1996, States Parties
have continued to find a balance between humanitarian concerns and military necessities by banning in particular blinding laser weapons, incendiary weapons in certain circumstances and providing measures to reduce the harmful effects of explosive remnants of war. Switzerland believes that the spirit of these efforts should inspire our reflections on all issues in the run-up to the upcoming Third Review Conference in Geneva.

Although Protocol V has been ratified by Switzerland, my delegation is of the opinion that the negative humanitarian effects caused during and after an armed conflict by the use of certain types of munitions, including sub-munitions, is still unacceptable. Indeed, some interpretations of general rules of existing humanitarian law are too wide to effectively regulate the use of such munitions. Switzerland believes that broader and more concrete measures, including of a preventive technical nature, are necessary. Thus, Switzerland supports a mandate for the negotiation of a new legally binding Protocol to the CCW aiming at reducing the impact during and after hostilities of the use of such munitions on the civilian population.

Finally, regarding Mines other than Anti-Personal Mines MOTAPM, Switzerland is of the view that a new protocol on MOTAPM has an added value for the Convention only if it contains ncms which strengthen existing international humanitarian law, in particular amended Protocol II.

Thank you, Madame Chairperson.