Statement
by the Representative of the Russian Federation at thematic discussions in the First
Committee of the 61st Session of the UN GA on item “Conventional Arms”

12 October 2006

Madam Chairperson,

The uncontrolled spread of conventional arms in the world is a justified concern for the international community. This problem is especially acute in the regions with low levels of social and economic development. One can hardly question its direct link to the intensity of military conflicts, poverty, mass violations of human rights and the norms of international humanitarian law, the involvement of children combatants in conflicts, and trans-border crime. We share concerns on the humanitarian aspects of this issue.

At the same time, the essence of the problem, in our view, lies primarily in illicit arms trafficking. Experience shows, that illicit shipments are the main source of supply to illegal paramilitaries, terrorist organizations, criminals, as well as governments of states under the UN Security Council embargo. We support the efforts of the international community aimed at preventing uncontrolled and illegal proliferation of conventional arms.

We regard the UN Register of Conventional Arms as an important instrument for strengthening confidence and security in international relations. Russia regularly provides data for the Register. We support the inclusion of MANPADS in the Register. We are satisfied with the results of the recent meeting of the UN Group of Government Experts
on the Register's operation and development. It succeeded in preparing and adopting a consensus draft report of the UN Secretary-General to the 61st Session of the UN General Assembly. GGE-2003 and GGE-2006 created a good record of the Register's development. The pragmatic tactics of "small steps" in this area appears to be realistic and acceptable in the current situation. We believe that further development of the Register should continue primarily taking into account an important goal of its universalization.

We note certain progress in control over SALW at national, regional and global levels. Yet, the problem of illicit proliferation of SALW in certain parts of the world still exists and, in fact, becomes more serious. We stand for resolving the problem of the proliferation of SALW on the basis of the UN Program of Action on SALW. We do not think that the Small Arms Review Conference was fruitless. Practically all participating States reaffirmed their commitment to the Program. No one raised the issue of its revision. On the contrary, every one stated the importance of enhancing joint efforts to fight SALW trafficking with a focus on resolving specific problems at the national and regional levels. We stand for continuing specific measures on combating the transfer of SALW from legal circulation to illicit.

We stand for strengthening regional interaction in preventing the uncontrolled spread of SALW. We have taken active part in the work of the special meeting of the OSCE Forum dedicated to SALW issues, which took place in Vienna on May 17, 2006. It reviewed a number of important proposals on improving SALW marking and tracing, as well as measures aimed at preventing illicit spread of MANPADS. In the context of fight against terror we give special attention to ensuring control over MANPADS. Such
weapons in the hands of terrorists present a direct threat to civil aviation. We actively work on the issue of MANPADS with our CIS partners. It is advisable to extend the provisions of arrangements on enforcing control over MANPADS exports adopted at one regional level to other regions.

We understand the wish of certain countries to take measures on formalizing the legal arms trade in order to prevent it from becoming a source for the black market, and a source of destabilizing stock accumulations, especially in crisis regions. We are willing to discuss this issue. The proposal regarding an international instrument that would regulate trade in conventional arms submitted by a group of states deserves attention. We believe that such work is justified when it aims at stopping illicit arms trafficking and provides for specific measures of preventing the transfer of arms from legal circulation to illicit primarily into the hands of terrorists. Moreover, we believe that the joint work at the United Nations would introduce order into legal production and export, i.e. rule cut piracy in arms production as well as production under expired licenses and re-export without origin country's authorization.

It is necessary to bear in mind the following. The already existing global and regional instruments are called to facilitate responsible arms trade. These are the UN Program of Action on SALW, CCW, the UN Register of Conventional Arms, the Wassenaar Arrangements, and others. Their main shortcomings are low efficiency and insufficient universality. Therefore, it would be logical, first, to try to maximize output of available instruments, and then to move on to developing new.

We are keen to see The Hague Code of Conduct (HCOC) in the field of preventing the spreading of ballistic missiles work with maximum efficiency. In this
connection, it is important that the HCOC participating states strictly comply with their commitments. We look forward to the HCOC becoming a true multilateral mechanism of transparency and confidence-building in the field of missile non-proliferation with the leading role of the United Nations; a mechanism that would unite us all, rather than lead to new divisions. Russian initiatives on the adaptation of the HCOC language are aimed at precisely this encouraging accession of missile significant states to the HCOC.

Madam Chairperson,

We share concerns of the international community over serious humanitarian consequences of the use of anti-personnel mines and reaffirm our commitment to the concept of the world free from mine weapons. The concrete contribution of Russia to achieving this goal is the ratification of the Second Additional Protocol to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). In principle, we do not rule out a possibility of acceding in due time to the Ottawa Convention on complete prohibition of anti-personnel mines. However, it would be possible only when there is confidence that the country can fulfill its obligations. And for this it is necessary to resolve a number of military, technical, economic and financial problems.

Russia’s big work, currently underway, on the reduction of stockpiles of such munitions represents our practical contribution to the cause of mine disarmament. More than six million anti-personnel mines have been destroyed over the past few years. The project on the destruction of yet another ten million most dangerous types of anti-personnel mines that are stored in depots is being implemented with the use of efficient and environmentally friendly technologies developed by Russian experts.
The Russian Federation strictly complies with all CCW provisions and Protocols. Recently the Lower House of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation approved the amendment to Article 1 of the Convention that extends its scope to non-international conflicts. Next is the ratification of CCW Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War (ERW). The upcoming 3rd CCW Review Conference will mark a milestone in the work to strengthen the Convention. We promote a thorough and balanced review of implementation of the Convention as well as realistic and balanced decisions.

We positively assess the work of the Group of Government Experts on the issues of mines other than anti-personnel mines. Its studies reaffirm the sensitivity of the issues under review from the viewpoint of states’ defense interests. We look forward to continuing a comprehensive exchange of opinions.

M-me Chairperson,

Concern is rising over the situation with control over conventional weapons in Europe. The entry into force of the adapted CFE Treaty is delayed and not for the first year - this is not our fault. Russia has implemented all CFE-related obligations made at the signing of the Adaptation Agreement in Istanbul in 1999. We stressed again during the 3rd CFE Review Conference that the Treaty is outdated to a large extent and has lost its touch with reality under the influence of far-reaching military and political changes. Its threshold limitations became watered down as a result of NATO’s expansion. We are satisfied neither with the results of that Conference nor with the overall CFE situation. The Russian Federation will carry out a thorough analysis of the RevCon’s results and positions of the NATO countries. Based on that analysis we will draw conclusions concerning our further policies in respect of current Treaty.
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