Statement

by

Mr. Raza Bashir Tarar, Minister,
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to the United Nations,

at

the Thematic Debate
on Conventional Weapons

in

the First Committee,
63rd United Nations General Assembly

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Mr. Chairman,

Three decades ago, the Final Document of the First Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament (SSOD-I) rightly characterized global military expenditure as a huge waste of resources. Today, when the world is gripped by multiple crises and a sizeable percentage of the human family are living below the poverty line, the world's military spending stands at nearly 1.4 trillion dollars. A glaring illustration is the fact that the United Nations, despite its mandate to maintain international peace and security has, at its disposal less than two percent of the global military expenditure.

This mammoth wastefulness goes on unimpeded in the form of build up of conventional arms and armed forces. While there is an urgent need to address the challenge of illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), it is at the same time imperative not to allow the SALW debate to divert focus from the destabilizing impact of the huge volume of trade in combat aircraft, aircraft carriers, airborne and early warning and control systems, missile defense, nuclear submarines and warships etc as well as related technologies. It is hard to over emphasize the fact that such dealings disrupt regional balances and exacerbate tensions. Driven mostly by commercial considerations, such trade is bereft of any meaningful legal and moral underpinning.

Developing countries which should be spending their scarce resources to ameliorate the lot of their citizens are the target clientele for such sales. For sellers, a conflict situation opens a window of opportunity for peddling the wares of destruction to both antagonists. Similarly, conventional imbalances stoke the disadvantaged party's quest for modernizing and buttressing its arsenal.

In this situation, it is a moral and legal imperative to promote conventional arms control, at the lowest possible levels of armaments and military forces, in order to promote regional and international peace and security. Preservation of a balance in the defense capabilities of states at the
lowest levels of armaments should be at the heart of conventional arms control.

Mr. Chairman,

SSOD-I clearly laid out that along with negotiations on nuclear disarmament measures, the international community should negotiate balanced reduction of armed forces and 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 ensure their security. Pakistan believes that the key to ensuring success of conventional arms control lies in its regional and sub regional pursuit since most threats to peace and security originate from conflicts between states located in the same region or sub region. Good practices like the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, a cornerstone of European security, can serve as models that can be emulated or adapted. As recognized by the international community, in any military equation, special responsibility for promoting regional security agreements lies with states with larger military capabilities.

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 along the following lines:

- **First**, the Office 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. Those should be used not only for reporting but also as means to develop 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.

**Mr. Chairman,**

In South Asia, Pakistan is pursuing a Strategic Restraint Regime, which has three constituents: conflict resolution; nuclear and missile restraint; and conventional balance. As a part of dialogue to address outstanding issues and work towards strategic stability and nuclear risk reduction, we will continue to strive for 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 supply of conventional weapons.

In line with our well known position on the issue of conventional arms control at the regional and sub-regional level; regional approaches to disarmament; and confidence building measures, at the regional and sub-regional level, like previous years, our delegation has, in addition to a resolution on negative security assurances, tabled three draft resolutions on these subjects. We thank the sponsors of the resolutions and would like to point out that all four resolutions remain open to further co-sponsorships.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Some developments in the Certain Conventional Weapons realm are noteworthy. One, the 2003 Protocol on ERW entered into force. Two, an agreement was reached to establish a compliance mechanism that would be supported by a pool of experts. Three, a plan of action was agreed to promote universality. And, four, agreement was reached on a sponsorship programme to facilitate participation of LDCs in the CCW-related activities.

We are of the view that the CCW and its five protocols adequately address humanitarian aspects of mines, including AVMs. While noting the
adoption of the Dublin Convention on Cluster Munitions in May this year, we believe that it should supplement and not supplant the CCW process. In this context we have high expectations of the CCW meetings in Geneva next month.

Any proposal with regard to conventional arms trade has to take into account the right of all States to manufacture, import, export, transfer and retain conventional arms for self-defence and security. Genuine efforts to prevent the destabilizing impact of conventional arms must consider not only constraints on their transfer and trade, but also their production and deployment. Controls on the transfer or trade in armaments cannot be divorced from the question of arms production and trade as well as the motivation for their transfer and sale. Any new criteria or guidelines should be objective and should take into account all the factors relevant to the issue of conventional arms. Subjective criteria and standards suited to the interests of major arms producing states will not serve the cause of international peace and stability.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.