STATEMENT

by Mr. Victor Vasiliev
Alternate Head of the Russian Delegation
to the First Committee of the 64th Session
of the UN General Assembly

Explanation of Vote on the draft resolution L.38
"Towards an arms trade treaty: establishing common international standards
for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms"

New York, October, 2009
Distinguished Mr. Chairman,

The Russian side fully shares the opinion that it is high time to bring order to international trade in conventional arms. First of all, in our view it is necessary to cut off the channels of diversion of arms from legal to illicit market and thus prevent the arms from falling into the hands of terrorists, extremists, illegal armed groupings, organized crime and the States that are under the UN Security Council embargoes. They acquire thousands of units of arms through illicit brokers and air carriers, non-State entities, unlicensed pirate manufacturing and illicit re-export.

We consider it an important step in the right direction that the international community has started addressing seriously this very complex objective of controlling arms flows.

We welcomed the report of the UN Secretary-General to the 63rd session of the General Assembly prepared on the basis of conclusions and recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE). As a follow-up, resolution 63/240 was adopted to establish an open-ended working group (OEWG). Both documents guide us to a gradual and painstaking work on a step-by-step basis and outline the elements to be considered within the OEWG, and clearly determine the mandate and tasks of this Group.

The logical order of steps within practical elaboration of the idea of the treaty has yielded its results. Today it is obvious that the majority of the UN Member States are willing to achieve concrete results in resolving the problems of international arms trade. The strategic direction was outlined and began to take shape.
We consider it counter-productive to discard the conclusions and recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts, provisions of the UN Secretary-General’s Report and resolution 63/240 as no longer pertinent. We have not yet agreed on the goals and objectives of a potential document on which its implementation directly depends, we have not yet analyzed key problems in the field of arms transfers which should determine the goals and tasks of the document and we have not yet determined its scope and parameters. What is actually proposed is to start the talks on the text of a document that has neither goals, objectives, parameters nor scope, and to skip the stages that are necessary for its preparation. The outcome of such negotiations may fall short of the expectations of those who are forcing the negotiation process.

The Russian side cannot support the draft resolution in its present form and calls upon Member States to continue the consistent work on the step-by-step basis, the modalities of which have been determined by the above-mentioned documents, give the Open-Ended Working Group a possibility to accomplish its work in the current status and come back to the issue of convening the Conference when the Group fulfils its work.

We propose that in 2010 the Open-Ended Working Group focused on determining and agreeing the goals, scope and parameters of a prospective document, bearing in mind that these goals should be specific, clear and feasible, arise from the key problems of international trade in arms, and the scope and parameters should reflect the agreed goals.