STATEMENT

On behalf of the European Union

by

H.E. Mr Magnus Hellgren
Ambassador

in the Conventional Weapons Cluster
of the General Assembly First Committee

United Nations
New York

19 October 2009

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -
1. I speak on behalf of the European Union. The Candidate Country the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and the EFTA countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova and Armenia align themselves with this statement.

2. Each year small arms and light weapons, and their ammunition, cause the death of more than 500,000 persons worldwide. The illicit spread and accumulation of small arms and light weapons represent a key element in triggering and fuelling armed conflicts. Their dissemination contributes to terrorism and organised crime, delays post-conflict reconstruction and curbs development.

3. The EU remains committed to eradicating the destabilising accumulation of and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. The EU has adopted several common actions and strategies to promote this goal, including technical and financial assistance. The EU includes the examination of an article on SALW in its agreements with third countries. We urge all States to join our efforts.

4. We promote the further mobilisation of resources to assist countries affected by armed violence and the irresponsible spread of small arms and light weapons. We continue to support the "Geneva Declaration on armed violence and development". Given the close link between security and development, we encourage States to incorporate actions aiming to eliminate illicit small arms and light weapons and to prevent armed violence into their national security, development and poverty reduction plans and strategies.

5. The European Union is a strong supporter of the UN Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We actively contribute to the preparations for the biannual meeting of States in 2010 and the second Review Conference. Our goal is to improve and strengthen the implementation of the Program of Action in all its aspects.

6. The EU is fully participating in the multilateral effort to support, including through financial assistance, the implementation of the International Instrument on the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons.

7. In 2007 the UN Group of Governmental Experts on illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons agreed a substantial report, including concrete recommendations. The EU calls for accelerating efforts to implement these important recommendations.

8. Based on the report of the UN Group of Governmental Experts on surplus stocks of conventional ammunition, last year's General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution encouraging all States to assess, on a voluntary basis, whether, in conformity with their legitimate security needs, parts of their stockpiles of conventional ammunition should be considered to be in surplus. The resolution also stated that appropriate controls

---

* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process
with regard to the security and safety of stockpiles of conventional ammunition are indispensable at the national level in order to eliminate the risk of explosion, pollution or diversion. It also encouraged States to contribute, on a voluntary and transparent basis, to the development within the United Nations of technical guidelines for the stockpile management of conventional ammunition. The EU continues to fully support these goals.

Mr Chairman,

9. Each day, everywhere in the world, people are affected by unregulated transfers of conventional weapons and their diversion to the illicit market. The negative impact of such transfers on peace, stability, respect for human rights and sustainable development is strongest in developing countries, particularly in Africa. That is why the EU continues to actively support multilateral negotiations on a legally binding instrument establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms. The EU remains convinced that the UN is the only appropriate forum for elaborating a truly universal Arms Trade Treaty.

10. The first two sessions in 2009 of the Open-ended Working Group, established in accordance with GA Resolution 63/240, have had extensive discussions concerning goals and objectives of a feasible Arms Trade Treaty. The OEWG report recognized the need to address the problems relating to the unregulated trade in conventional weapons and their diversion to the illicit market and supported that international action should be taken to address the problem. Thus, there is now a clear consensus that there is a need to take international action to address these problems.

11. The EU believes that now is the time for the First Committee to take stock of and review the work of the Open-ended Working Group. The EU believes that we must now engage in the substance of an Arms Trade Treaty and use the remaining sessions of the OEWG to this end. The EU strongly supports the establishment of a UN Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty in 2012 and remains convinced that a global, legally binding Treaty establishing common international standards for the trade in conventional arms and prevention of diversion to the illicit market will help to address the global problem of armed violence. We have to work energetically together to achieve this.

Mr Chairman,

12. The EU continues to support efforts aimed at preventing the illicit transfer of and unauthorised use of MANPADS, including through the implementation of the annual General Assembly resolution adopted by consensus.

13. The European Union welcomes the substantial progress achieved in the universalisation and implementation of the Convention on the Prohibitions of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction. Significant progress has been achieved in clearing mined areas and assisting victims, but much remains to be done. The EU's overall goal is a world free of anti-personnel mines, without any new anti-personnel mine victims and where sustainable care is provided for
the victims of these weapons. The financial support provided by the EU and its Member States to mine action clearly illustrates our commitment towards this goal. The total EU funding of mine action over the last ten years of over 1.5 billion euro represents almost half of the world’s financial assistance to mine action during that period.

14. Promotion and universalisation of the Convention remains one of our highest priorities. Currently there are 156 States Parties. States that remain outside the Convention still retain large quantities of anti-personnel mines. The EU appeals to all States which have not yet acceded to the Convention to do so as soon as possible.

15. In only a few weeks time the Parties to the Convention will meet in Cartagena, Colombia, for the second Review Conference. The first Review Conference in 2004 adopted an ambitious action plan for the implementation of the Convention. We expect this year’s Review Conference to give renewed impetus to our common efforts to reach all the objectives of the Convention, including a world free from anti-personnel mines. The Cartagena Action Plan should secure full compliance by all with Treaty obligations while directing our intention fully to the humanitarian essence of the Convention for the coming years.

Mr Chairman,

16. The right of parties to an armed conflict to choose methods or means of warfare is not unlimited. This fundamental rule of international humanitarian law has guided the international community when adopting, implementing and further developing the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, CCW, and its Protocols. By weapon-specific prohibitions and restrictions the CCW regime strengthens several rules regulating the conduct of hostilities, such as the requirement that a distinction be made at all times between civilians and combatants, and the prohibition of the use of weapons that inflict excessive injury or unnecessary suffering on combatants. The EU calls on all States which have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the CCW and its Protocols.

17. Noting the continued developments in the implementation of the CCW Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War, the EU welcomes the recent adoption of its Plan of Action on Victim Assistance.

18. The EU remains firmly committed to responding to the humanitarian problems caused by cluster munitions. The EU considers it essential to make strong commitments in this area, which are likely to have concrete results on the ground and vis-à-vis the victims of these weapons and to have a true humanitarian impact.

19. The EU welcomes the adoption in Dublin and the opening for signature in Oslo of the Convention on Cluster Munitions as well as the growing number of ratifications, which will lead to its entry into force.

20. As some States are not yet in a position to join the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the EU remains convinced that concluding in the framework of the CCW a
complementary agreement, taking into account both humanitarian and military aspects, could significantly contribute to addressing the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions. The Group of Governmental Experts within the CCW dealing with cluster munitions has continued its work in 2009. In our view, a future legally binding instrument on cluster munitions within the CCW needs to be compatible with the Convention on Cluster Munitions and should also include provisions on cooperation and assistance. We would expect such an instrument to make a significant contribution from the humanitarian point of view and contain an immediate prohibition, whether on the use, production or transfer of cluster munitions.

Mr Chairman,

21. Transparency in the field of conventional weapons is a key component in combating the uncontrolled spread of such weapons and for promoting an atmosphere of trust and security. The EU reiterates its strong support for the UN Register on Conventional Arms in this regard. The EU commends the members of the Group of Governmental Experts for their efforts to make the Register more relevant to a larger number of countries by including a separate category on small arms and light weapons, and expresses its disappointment that the GGE did not reach consensus on recommendations to that effect. The inclusion of SALW as a separate category remains a priority for the EU.

22. The exchange of information on national legislation, regulations and procedures on the transfer of arms, military equipment, dual use goods and technology, contributes to mutual understanding and confidence among states. Such transparency is also beneficial to states that are in the process of developing legislation on these transfers. The EU encourages member states to provide the relevant information to the Secretary General for inclusion in the electronic database.

23. Transparency in the field of military expenditure is another key element in building trust between States and preventing conflict. The increase in global military expenditure in the last decade emphasise the need for an effective UN mechanism for reporting such expenditure. This is why the EU looks forward to the work of the Group of Governmental Experts established by the General Assembly and mandated to examine in 2010 the implementation of the standard instrument to account for military expenditure.

Thank you.