STATEMENT BY

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The First Committee of the Sixty-Fourth Session of the UNGA

Thematic Debate on Conventional Weapons

UNITED NATIONS

NEW YORK, 20 October 2009
Mr Chairman,

The Netherlands fully aligns itself with the statement under this agenda item, pronounced by Sweden on behalf of the European Union.

I take the floor to highlight further the importance the government of the Netherlands attaches to conventional arms control and related issues. We very much welcome the increased attention given to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, but at the same time all of us should remain aware of the fact that it is conventional arms, and in particular Small Arms and Light Weapons, that have a devastating impact on the daily lives of millions of people all over the world.

The uncontrolled and irresponsible spread of conventional arms, including SALW, the diversion of legitimately acquired arms into the illicit trade are problems which concern us all and which we should address together.

We are convinced that joint action can and must be taken, while respecting national responsibilities and sovereignty, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the UN Charter.

An example of cooperation is the consensus report of the 2007 Group of Governmental Experts on Illicit Brokering, which contains, inter alia, “optional elements for national legislation” on brokering. Cooperation in this sense means sharing information, sharing best practices and the willingness to learn from the experiences of others. We call on all states to make use of these elements.

Mr Chairman,

An important element of co-operation is trust, and one way of building trust is by taking transparency measures. My delegation will be introducing the traditional draft resolution on Transparency in Armaments, which deals with the UN Register on Conventional Arms, later this week.

The Office for Disarmament Affairs has established an electronic database on national legislation on transfer of arms, on which my delegation is tabling a draft resolution again this year. We are convinced that countries in the process of developing or updating national legislation will find this a very useful tool.

Mr. Chairman,

While responsible arms transfers are a legitimate part of international trade and can contribute to international peace, security and stability, irresponsible transfers can fuel all kinds of conflict and set back development. These problems have no passports.
The entire international community therefore has an interest in an Arms Trade Treaty that establishes clear common standards for national controls of international trade in conventional arms. The Netherlands has supported an Arms Trade Treaty from day one. We favour a strong Treaty, that sets parameters derived from the highest possible standards, including on human rights, and not the lowest common denominator.
We must set out the full scope of responsibilities that States have under international law and international standards. We must move from words to works. We must do so now.

The Netherlands warmly welcomes the role of civil society in this process. We, as government officials, need their resources and inputs and can use the ideas launched in public debate. We were therefore pleased to work together with OXFAM and the United Nations University in organising an ATT side event two weeks ago.

Mr Chairman,

Another issue close to the heart of my delegation is that of the humanitarian consequences of explosive remnants of war, including cluster munition remnants, and of anti-personnel landmines. The Netherlands signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions and is in the process of ratification, which we hope will be concluded in the near future. In the meantime we have already started the destruction of its stockpiles of cluster munitions. A significant part of these stockpiles, (air-dropped cluster bombs and artillery shells) will be destroyed by February 2010. The destruction of the remaining stockpiles is subject to a public call for tender. In any case all the Dutch cluster munitions will be destroyed long before the CCM deadline of eight years after entry into force. We call upon all countries to destroy their stockpiles, if possible even before being legally bound to do so.

At the same time, we remain in favour of continued negotiations within the framework of the CCW on a legally binding instrument on cluster munitions. As stated on other occasions, such a Sixth Protocol should make a significant contribution to addressing the humanitarian consequences of cluster munitions, contain an immediate prohibition and be compatible with the CCM.

On the question of Anti-personnel landmines, the Netherlands, as a long time supporter of the Ottawa Convention and a reliable contributor to global mine-action, is looking forward to the the Cartagena Summit for a Mine Free World, which will take place six weeks from now. We thank the government of Colombia for hosting this important event. We pledge our continued engagement with the objectives of the Mine Ban Treaty and with the international action to achieve those.

Mr Chairman,

Finally, allow me to draw this Committee’s attention to the important issue of the relationship between armed violence and development. Research shows that this is a complicated and mutually reinforcing, unfortunately negative relationship with devastating effects in many parts of the world.
The Secretary-General’s recent report “Promoting development through the reduction and prevention of armed violence” (document A/64/228), offers an impressive, yet sobering insight into the daily reality that many people have to face.

Recognition of the negative spiral that the linkage between armed violence and development constitutes is the first step. Therefore the Netherlands, together with around one hundred other countries, has subscribed to the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development.

Taking joint action to break this link is the next and even more important step. That is why, for instance, we are working with the government of Burundi to develop activities and programmes that can serve as models for action elsewhere, providing improved security and impacting on the daily lives of people.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I wish to restate The Netherlands’ firm commitment to conventional arms control and we stand ready to continue working with all other members of the international community in this regard.

Thank you