STATEMENT

by

H.E. Ms. Sanja Štiglic
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Slovenia

in the Conventional Weapons Cluster

of the General Assembly First Committee

New York, 20 October 2009
Thank you Mr. Chairman,

In my statement today I would like to present our views on important developments in the field of conventional weapons. Before I do that, please allow to express our full support to the statement delivered by Ambassador Magnus Hellgren of Sweden on behalf of the European Union (EU).

Mr. Chairman,

As we heard from previous speakers, some important developments and events took place in the field of conventional weapons in the past year. In my statement today, I would like to outline Slovenia’s views on three elements that we see particularly important in this regard.

Let me first speak on the issue of cluster munitions, a conventional weapon system that kills indiscriminately - immediately or often long after its intended operational military use. In the past five years, we heard many calls of the international community to ban the cluster munitions. Slovenia from the very beginning supports the efforts that spurred so-called Oslo process, led by Austria, Belgium, Ireland and Norway, which consequently resulted in signature of a new Convention on Cluster Munitions in early December last year. Slovenia sees the efforts in the framework of the CCW process and Oslo process complementary. Therefore we should strengthen our efforts within CCW to reach common understanding.

The new Convention on Cluster Munitions is a historic achievement, a landmark in international humanitarian and disarmament efforts, comprehensively and effectively banning cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians. States Parties are obliged to assist victims, clear cluster munitions remnants and destroy stockpiles. In this regard Slovenia started to implement its national program of destruction and elimination of our limited national arsenal of cluster munitions. Slovenia also ratified the convention in mid-August this year, thus becoming the seventeenth State Party to the Convention. We are convinced that the remaining ratifications needed for its entry into force, will follow quickly, hopefully before the end of this year. We hope that after entering into force, the Convention will become - on the same way as the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines - a universal norm having a direct impact on the lives of effected people around the world. We are looking forward to the first meeting of States parties and welcome initiative of PDR Laos, who kindly offered to host this important meeting.

In order to contribute to post-conflict recovery, the Slovenia established in 1998 the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance (ITF) as a humanitarian, non-profit organization. ITF helps countries in South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia in solving landmine problems and assists landmine survivors with rehabilitation. The activities of ITF in the clearance of other explosive remnants of war, including cluster munitions in South-Eastern Europe, proved to be cost-effective and efficient. After more than ten years of experience, ITF will expand its programs to other related issues.
Mr. Chairman,

Let me also add a few words on the parallel negotiating process, which is taking place in Geneva within the framework of the Convention on the prohibition of Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). Slovenia regrets the fact that Group of Governmental experts (GGE) of the CCW has not achieved any significant progress in its work in the course of last year. An opportunity to conclude a new protocol to the CCW, which would include all major states producers and possessors of the cluster munitions, has been missed. However, we still see the advantages of the CCW framework. Slovenia therefore urges the GGE to step up its efforts and try to conclude its work by the end of 2010. We believe that the prospects for success are still there, and that important questions are at stake in the framework of the CCW.

Let me outline our views on the issue of international trade with conventional weapons. Slovenia from very beginning supported the efforts to establish the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). We co-sponsored relevant resolution that this committee adopted three years ago. We also provided our position to the UN Secretary General a year later and took active part in the work of the Open Ended Working Group.

We are convinced that a robust ATT is needed to effectively regulate the international trade with conventional weapons. We are convinced that it is time to make a step forward and set a roadmap for future negotiations for the Treaty itself. The draft resolution proposed by the United Kingdom - that we support - is timely and appropriate answer to this challenge. We have to set a course for our work for the coming three years and convene a diplomatic conference in 2012, where ATT should be finalized and opened for signature. It is important to begin with a process that will lead us to successful negotiations of the ATT in 2012. We are convinced that soon we should have well-functioning ATT as a valuable instrument for effective regulation of the international arms trade with conventional weapons.

And last but not least, Mr. Chairman - allow me to comment on the issue of confidence building and transparency in the field of conventional weapons. We are concerned of current state of affairs within some existing international mechanisms. This goes for the UN Register of Conventional Arms, established 19 years ago by this committee. We consider the register as a valuable tool for increasing confidence and cooperation among the states, being essential foundation of the international peace and security. Slovenia urges all countries present to participate actively and provide their national reports to the Register managed by the UN Secretariat. This will prove ultimate relevance to the register itself and importantly contribute to the international peace and stability. That is why we fully support the draft resolution on Transparency in armaments presented by the Netherlands, which we have also co-sponsored.

Transparency in armaments will contribute to establishing confidence among states, at the same time, it is bringing us a step forward in disarmament and arms control.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.