First Committee
Thematic Debate on Cluster 4 – “Conventional Weapons”

18 October 2010

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Luiz Filipe de Macedo Soares, Permanent Representative of Brazil to the Conference on Disarmament, on behalf of MERCOSUR and Associated States

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I have the honor to speak on behalf of MERCOSUR Members and Associated States: Argentina, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Uruguay and my own country, Brazil.

Mr. Chairman,

The effective implementation of the United Nations Program of Action to prevent, combat and eliminate the illicit traffic of small arms and light weapons in all its aspects (UNPoA) is a matter of high priority and urgency to MERCOSUR and Associated States.

In this context, some steps are indispensable to foster the application of the Program of Action: (i) the adoption of a legally binding instrument on identification and tracing and on illicit brokering, (ii) the establishment of efficient verification systems of end-user certificates, (iii) the establishment of an international framework for their authentication, reconciliation and standardization, and (iv) the promotion and strengthening of international cooperation and assistance and of national capacity building as crosscutting independent issues.

MERCOSUR and Associated States understand, in addition, that, by referring to the illicit traffic of small arms and light weapons "in all its aspects", the UNPoA should necessarily cover ammunitions and explosives.

The effective application of the UNPoA requires a comprehensive approach. Its non-biding nature should not represent an obstacle to its effective implementation.

Mr. Chairman,

The core role of the UNPoA in the small arms and light weapons field requires its strict and continuous follow-up by the international community.

MERCOSUR and Associated States welcome the results achieved during the Fourth Biennial Conference of States to review the implementation of the UNPoA, held last June, and express appreciation for the work of its Chairman, Ambassador Pablo Macedo, from Mexico, and his facilitators. The final substantive document, approved by consensus, enables the debate to continue on a series of issues, such as illicit trade across borders, international cooperation and assistance, strengthening of the follow-up mechanisms of UNPoA and the implementation of the International Tracing Instrument.

In this context, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defense of Mercosur, in the framework of the UNASUR, following the decision by their Presidents to strengthen South America as a Zone of Peace (Bariloche, 2009), decided to establish the Mechanism on Confidence and Security Building Measures, including the decision to "develop and improve national systems for marking and tracing of weapons as well as active cooperation among Member States of UNASUR in the solution of cases of diversion, smuggling and illegal use of weapons under their custody or from its territory".
It is also relevant to recall that in 2001 a Working Group on Firearms and Ammunition of MERCOSUR and Associated States was established in order to share national experiences, to work on harmonization of national laws on firearms and ammunition control and to coordinate political positions on the issue. This deliberative forum meets twice a year and has become a very useful tool for coordinating positions among countries of MERCOSUR and Associated States. At this point, we wish to emphasize that at its last meeting, the Working Group on Firearms and Ammunition of MERCOSUR and Associated States discussed the creation of a register of weapons seized and confiscated at the regional level, while ensuring confidentiality of the data concerning the holders of those weapons, based on an experience developed in Argentina.

MERCOSUR and Associated States express their expectation, in particular, with regard to the Meeting of Governmental Experts that will be held next May, 2011, chaired by Ambassador Jim McLay, from New Zealand. This event, which should be of technical nature and count with the largest possible participation of States’ experts, should contribute to the objective of strengthening the relationship between the national institutions involved, as a crucial aspect for the full and effective implementation of the UNPoA. MERCOSUR and Associated States will participate in the Meeting of Governmental Experts with this spirit.

On this item of the First Committee agenda, MERCOSUR and Associated States express their support for Colombia, South Africa and Japan for presenting, annually, the draft resolution entitled “Illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects”.

Mr. Chairman,

In the same vein of small arms and light weapons, MERCOSUR and Associated States highlight the need to face problems related to non-regulated trade of conventional weapons and its deviation to the illicit market.

Considering this goal, we have been actively participating in the preparatory process of the 2012 Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). In this regard, we thank Ambassador Roberto García Moritán, from Argentina, the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee of the 2012 Conference, for the way he has been conducting the task. The first meeting of the Preparatory Committee, last July, allowed for an open and inclusive discussion on different expectations and objectives that the States Parties of the Organization have on this issue. We expect the following meetings, to be held in 2011, to promote an increasing convergence of views, reflecting the interests of all States.

MERCOSUR and Associated States believe that, as a final result, the 2012 Conference should lead, on the basis of consensus, to the conclusion of a legally binding instrument, negotiated on a non-discriminatory, transparent and multilateral basis, establishing common international rules for the arms trade.

It should be said that this regulation must not affect the right of legitimate self-defense recognized in Article 51 of the Charter, as well as the right of all States to
manufacture, import, export, transfer and possess conventional weapons for legitimate self-defense and security needs.

Mr. Chairman,

MERCOSUR and Associated States reiterate their support for international community efforts towards the regulation of cluster munitions, with the goal of significantly reducing the humanitarian, social and economic consequences of the use of these weapons to the civil population. In addition to the Oslo Convention on Cluster Munitions, which entered into force last August, it is important that the States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons maintain the necessary support for the work of the Group of Governmental Experts so to continue to consider the issue in order to adopt a Protocol within the CCWC.

We also reaffirm the need of eliminating anti-personnel landmines. MERCOSUR and Associated States positively evaluate the results of the Second Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention, and, among them, the adoption of the Plan of Action of 2010-1014 and the Cartagena Declaration. We highlight the important discussions carried out in recent months about the Implementation Support Unit of the Convention (ISU), which we expect to be strengthened in order to properly carry out its functions.

Mr. Chairman,

MERCOSUR and Associated States consider that confidence-building measures are an important tool for the consolidation of peace and security.

The South American region has pioneered the implementation of confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. For many years, States in the region have been committed to strengthening the existing consultation and assistance mechanisms on security and defense matters and to promote their progressive articulation, as well as to improve cooperation in security and confidence-building measures and to promote their implementation.

MERCOSUR and Associated States reiterate the importance of continuing to promote an enabling environment for arms control and limitation of conventional weapons, which allow each member to devote more resources to their economic and social development, taking into consideration compliance with international commitments and their legitimate defense and security needs.

Since the 59th General Assembly of the United Nations, MERCOSUR and Associated States support the resolution presented by Argentina on “Confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms”. Our countries call on all States to support the draft and contribute to the electronic data basis originated in these resolutions, which facilitates the assessment of the progress achieved in the elaboration and implementation of these measures on a global level.

Thank you.