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STATEMENT BY
H.E. Mr. Paul van den IJssel

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to the Conference on Disarmament

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First Committee
Thematic Debate on Conventional Weapons

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Mr Chairman,

The Netherlands fully aligns itself with the European Union statement under this agenda item. Further to that statement I would like to take the opportunity to draw this Committee’s attention to a number of issues my delegation attaches particular importance to.

In the field of conventional arms, this year has seen two important events: the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty and the fourth Biennial Meeting of States (BMS) to consider the implementation of the Programme of Action against the illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Mr Chairman,

On the ATT, the position of my government is well known. The Netherlands favours a strong Treaty, that sets the highest possible standards, including on human rights, for the responsible international transfer of conventional arms, including small arms and light weapons, ammunition and relevant components. Ultimately, the Treaty should constitute a framework for what is, and will remain, a national responsibility: the control of international arms transfers. We do not accept an a contrario interpretation of the Treaty, whereby the Treaty would in some cases constitute an obligation to supply.

In July 2010, the Netherlands participated actively in the PrepCom for the Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty. My delegation looks back on this meeting with satisfaction and we thank Ambassador Moritan of Argentina for providing us with his draft papers. Progress has definitely been made, but some of the crucial issues, such as the scope of the future treaty and its parameters, need further work.

We look forward to continuing our deliberations at the third meeting of the PrepCom in February, during which further progress towards a robust ATT will have to be made.

Regarding the BMS, we are particularly looking forward to the first Meeting of Governmental Experts (MGE) under the Programme of Action, which will take place in May 2011. Preparations for that meeting have already started under the able guidance of Ambassador Jim McLay of New Zealand.
In our view the MGE should be a forum for concrete and pragmatic exchanges on the implementation of the PoA, contributing to a better understanding of the theory and, even more importantly, of the practicalities of taking action under the Programme. We therefore support the idea of concentrating the debate on a limited number of issues, preferably two, in addition to cooperation and assistance as a cross-cutting issue.

Mr Chairman,

Finally, although this year my delegation will not be tabling the resolutions on the UN Register on Conventional Arms and on the database for National Legislation on Transfers of Arms, I would like to reiterate the importance of reporting annually and to call on all Member States that have not yet done so, to submit their reports to the Secretary-General without delay.

Thank you