Statement by Mr. Raza Bashir Tarar, Minister, Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN, New York, at the Thematic Debate on Conventional Weapons in the First Committee, 65th UNGA, on 20 October 2010

Mr. Chairman,

While the spectre of nuclear weapons hangs over the world pending materialization of the much awaited nuclear disarmament it is the conventional weapons and related components that fuel internal and interstate conflicts.

Notwithstanding the global financial, food and fuel crises, the current global military expenditure stands at US $ 1.53 trillion; representing 2.7% of the world GDP. The last ten years have seen a fifty percent increase in the global spending on conventional weapons. Ironically, the weapons that fuel conflicts come from areas that enjoy peace. Only four countries account for 73% of global arms exports. It is indeed an oxymoron of global dimensions that the guardians of peace and security also make its attainment difficult!

The major importers of these arms are the developing countries, mostly in the Middle East, Asia and Africa.

The total UN Budget is a paltry 3% of the world military expenditure. Hence we are spending 33 times more on breeding, exacerbating and maintaining conflict than preventing it!

Mr. Chairman,

The apparently egregious spending on armaments though highly profitable for the sellers and middlemen is not entirely their creation. Its real parents are unresolved conflict and strategic asymmetry. The calls for diverting resources from armaments to development will not bear fruit unless the root causes of insecurity are addressed. Asymmetries in conventional armaments in conflict areas promote insecurity and increase military spending. Strategically or commercially motivated arms supplies to tense or conflict ridden regions disrupt delicate strategic balance, enhancing the quest for balancer conventional capabilities or, in case of an unmanageable differential, the compulsion for acquiring nuclear weapons and missile capabilities. Besides addressing the root causes of insecurity, conventional arms control must ensure that proclamations about balanced reductions in conventional arms are translated into action.

The pursuit of the noble goal of Global Zero should, therefore, be in tandem with conventional disarmament. We have to make sure that elimination of nuclear weapons does not give way to the unworkable conventional imbalance that spawned the two World Wars. The final document of SSOD-I
provides clear direction in this regard: "Together with negotiations on nuclear disarmament measures, negotiations should be carried out on the balanced reduction of forces and of conventional armaments, based on the principle of undiminished security of the parties with a view to promoting or enhancing stability at a lower military level, taking into account the need of all states to protect their security".

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan firmly believes that confidence-building and arms reduction in the regional and sub-regional context to be of paramount importance in this context. Out of our traditional First Committee resolutions three relate to regional disarmament and conventional arms control and confidence building measures in the regional and sub-regional contexts. Earlier this year, our delegation to the Conference on Disarmament proposed addition of an item “Conventional Arms Control at the Regional and Sub-regional Level” in the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. Chairman,

A further complicating factor is development of advanced conventional weapons with lethality approaching that of WMD without the public relations fallout! The UN disarmament machinery must address this dimension promptly.

In its own region Pakistan has proposed a three pronged Strategic Restraint Regime consisting of (i) conflict resolution; (ii) nuclear and missile restraint and; conventional balance.

Pakistan looks forward to a successful outcome of the Fourth Review Conference of the CCW, scheduled for next year. In the inter-sessional period, we intend to remain actively engaged to promote the universalization and implementation of the CCW Protocols which adequately balance humanitarian concerns and military compulsions. The Convention draws strength from its near-universal nature.

We also support continued negotiations in the CCW to achieve consensus on cluster munitions by reaching a workable compromise between the humanitarian and security dimensions A CCW Protocol on cluster munitions, by bringing together the major producers and users of the cluster munitions would help mitigate the humanitarian fallout of such weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan has been playing an active role in the biennial meetings to assess the status of implementation of the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, in all its aspects. We look forward to a productive Meeting of Governmental Experts (MGE) in May 2011. We believe that the consensual UNPoA on SALW should be strengthened rather than being supplanted by parallel instruments.

Mr. Chairman,

In regard to a potential Arms Trade Treaty, we are in favour of an inclusive, step-by-step, consensual, objective and UN Charter-compliant approach. State primacy in decision making should be respected and preserved. Micro-management should be avoided and in any case arms transactions between two sovereign states which are not subject to any UN arms embargo should not be second-guessed.

I thank you Mr. Chairman