NEW ZEALAND

UNGA 66: FIRST COMMITTEE

CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS

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18 OCTOBER 2011

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY
Mr Chairman,

New Zealand welcomes the intensified focus evident at present on ways to diminish the harm to human security and the damage to national, and indeed international, stability that conventional weapons can inflict. Irresponsible, or diverted, arms transfers contribute significantly to armed conflict, the displacement of people, transnational crime and terrorism, and the prospects in many regions for peace and development.

Some say that global attention on weapons of mass destruction - weapons with an undeniably 'bigger bang' - has for too long crowded out global efforts to tackle very pressing problems such as the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Whether or not this is true, and our current attention overdue, we have no doubt that both an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), and strengthened implementation of the UN's Programme of Action (PoA), would be highly beneficial to human security and sustainable development in many parts of the globe.

The next 12 months hold out the promise of significant advances on conventional weapon issues. For us, the schedule of forthcoming meetings - for instance on the ATT - does not represent the "artificial imposition of deadlines" as was suggested in this Committee last week. Rather, it represents the promise of necessary action - action in the face of what many colleagues here have depicted as a "humanitarian crisis" in their countries.

Cluster Munitions

Cluster Munitions have been the subject of a number of recent meetings, and will be again during the forthcoming Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) to be held in Geneva next month.

For New Zealand, the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) continues to provide the gold standard for any effort by the international community to address the humanitarian suffering caused by cluster munitions. Last month's CCM meeting in Beirut showcased the impressive strides that have been made in universalising the Convention and the solid progress in implementing its provisions.

New Zealand is pleased to continue on in our role as the Convention's Coordinator on National Implementation Measures. To assist CCM states parties, or prospective states parties, we have recently developed two tools to help in implementing the Convention's obligations: both tools are particularly applicable to small states which have not been affected by past use or possession of cluster munitions.

One of these tools is a checklist of national laws or measures which could usefully be reviewed for compatibility with the Convention's obligations. The other is a very short (two-page) example of model implementing legislation.
The New Zealand Delegation is happy to answer any questions, or to follow-up individually with any states wanting to know more about these two documents.

The negotiation of the CCM was the direct result of a strong recognition of the dangers of cluster munitions – weapons which are widely regarded as unreliable, inaccurate and indiscriminate. Awareness of the unacceptable humanitarian consequences of cluster munitions has also been the impetus to consideration of the possibility of standard-setting on these weapons in the context of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW).

In this regard, I cannot help but note the cautionary words delivered here last week by the representative of the ICRC that “in the field of international humanitarian law we would consider it regrettable if new norms were adopted that would contradict rather than complement the CCM and would allow the development and use of specific types of cluster munitions that are likely to perpetuate the humanitarian problem”.

Clearly, Mr Chairman, there will be an important process of evaluation necessary for all CCM supporters during the November CCW RevCon as to whether or not there is an important humanitarian dividend from the adoption of a Protocol VI.

_Ottawa Convention on Landmines_

The trail blazed by the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel landmines was of significant inspiration to the original CCM proponents and it continues to set a positive example for implementation of the CCM.

Next month’s (11th) meeting of states parties is being hosted by Cambodia – a country whose unprecedented levels of landmine contamination provided one of the original spurs to the Convention’s adoption. The meeting in Phnom Penh will provide an excellent opportunity to reflect on the remarkable progress that has been made to end the suffering caused by landmines but also to chart a course for further action.

_Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons_

I have already remarked on the highly destabilising effects of the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW). It remains the greatest humanitarian and security threat for many UN members.

10 years into its existence, the UN Programme of Action can rightly claim some successes. However, international efforts to implement the PoA remain incomplete. We still lack capacity to consistently monitor and assess implementation. The international community could do much better at providing targeted assistance and support. We have yet to find a way to address sensitive yet important areas such as border controls and the application of the PoA in conflict settings.
Next year’s Review Conference provides an important opportunity to address the full range of these issues and to reinvigorate the UN small arms process. A key focus must be on practical measures to support implementation. The recent open-ended meeting of governmental experts, which New Zealand chaired, has set some directions on this. A successful RevCon is essential for the continued credibility and effectiveness of the PoA process.

**Arms Trade Treaty**

We meet early next year for the final session of the Prepcom and then, in July, for the Diplomatic Conference to conclude and adopt an Arms Trade Treaty.

New Zealand has no doubt whatsoever about the significant humanitarian dividend that will flow from a robust Arms Trade Treaty – both globally and also in our own region. Its successful conclusion is a priority for the New Zealand Government and we are committed to working intensely over the coming year to ensure a successful outcome.

The implementation framework put in place by the ATT will be a very important part of the Treaty. As a contribution to the debate on this issue, New Zealand put out a Non-Paper for discussion purposes earlier this year. A very brief summary of this Paper is set out in the Secretary General’s Report contained in document A/66/166 but the full text is available from the New Zealand Delegation.

Assistance with capacity-building, especially for small states such as New Zealand’s Pacific Island neighbours, will be key to the Treaty’s implementation. Our Pacific region rightly attaches considerable importance to the successful conclusion of the ATT. At last month’s meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum, hosted by New Zealand as its current Chair, Forum Leaders welcomed progress in the Prepcom process and – wishing to ensure a strong and proactive voice for our region in the concluding negotiations - expressed support for the development of a common Pacific Islands Forum position on the Treaty.

Much of the progress on the ATT to date has been due to the leadership of the Chair of the process, Ambassador Roberto Garcia Moritan of Argentina, who has conducted our work in a very inclusive and transparent manner. His skill in capturing the key concerns and predominant view of the UN membership is very evident in the composite Chair’s Draft Paper which he circulated in July.

We believe this text has provided us with an excellent foundation – a "reference guide," as Ambassador Moritan described it yesterday – that will considerably shorten the distance to be travelled next July as we move forward and conclude the ATT. We hope very much for Ambassador Moritan’s continued leadership at the Diplomatic Conference.
To conclude, Mr Chair, it remains the firm hope – indeed expectation – of my Delegation that when we meet at next year’s General Assembly we will all be able to look back over the preceding year and justifiably claim that our work on conventional weapons has made a significant improvement in global frameworks for human security.