STATEMENT BY
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to the Conference on Disarmament

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Mr Chairman,

Under the present agenda item of Conventional Arms, the Netherlands would like to touch upon three major events in the field of conventional arms, that will ask our attention in the coming months. In chronological order these are the Fourth Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), the fourth prepcorm and the Diplomatic Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), and the prepcorm and the Second Review Conference of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW PoA).

Mr Chairman,

Next month, Geneva will be the venue for the fourth Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). The CCW constitutes an essential part of International Humanitarian Law, and we are committed to its preservation and further development. We welcome progress in the implementation of the latest addition to the CCW family, Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of war and we support the further development of innovative mechanisms for the exchange of information, such as the annual meetings of experts and the web-based information system (WISP.V).

With regard to the ongoing negotiations on a sixth protocol on cluster munitions in the framework of the CCW, the Netherlands hopes that they will be concluded with agreement on an instrument. The protocol will need to contain meaningful prohibitions and restrictions on these types of weapons for those countries as yet not in a position to join the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM). We consider a future Protocol VI as an intermediate step towards universalisation of the CCM. As a party to the CCM, the Netherlands has committed itself never to use cluster munitions again. The destruction of our stockpiles is in full progress and will be completed long before the deadline stipulated in the Convention.

Mr Chairman,

Regarding the process towards an Arms Trade Treaty, we have stated on several previous occasions that The Netherlands strongly supports the establishment of a strong and robust ATT. We believe that responsible arms trade is a legitimate part of international trade relations, but it is also clear that irresponsible or illegal arms trade may be a factor in threats to peace, security, stability, and may lead to violations of international law, including human rights law and humanitarian law.
It is in the interest of the entire international community that the international trade in conventional arms be submitted to a comprehensive legally binding instrument containing common minimum standards for transfers of conventional arms. Our aim is a robust Treaty that includes as many States as possible.

An ATT should oblige States to adopt and implement national legislation in order to prevent that transfers of conventional arms may, directly or indirectly, provoke, prolong or exacerbate conflicts, otherwise affect security or stability, or be detrimental to human rights or sustainable development. The ATT therefore should have the broadest possible scope, both in terms of categories of arms and equipment, as well as types of transfers.

The Treaty should include obligatory transparency and reporting requirements, as transparency is an important tool to ensure implementation of the standards to be agreed upon. The Netherlands itself has a tradition of openness regarding its arms trade. This shows that transparency and a thriving defence industry go very well together.

The Netherlands deems the support of civil society essential for a successful ATT. While the final decisions will have to be made by sovereign states, we aim for broad participation of NGO's in the process. Equally, the Netherlands believes that involvement of the defence industry will be a key to success.

Mr Chairman,

Small Arms and Light Weapons annually cause more deaths worldwide than any other category of weapons. Their illicit trade and uncontrolled spread adversely affect regional and international stability; they fuel conflicts and armed violence and pose a threat to the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people around the globe.

The UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects is the only global instrument in this field. At the 3rd and the 4th Biennial Meeting of States, and at the first Meeting of Governmental Experts, held earlier this year in this very room, we as the international community showed our commitment to fighting the scourge of SALW.

The Netherlands sees the upcoming Second Review Conference as a unique opportunity, not only for taking stock of our achievements, but for a genuine assessment of the PoA. This implies that we not only celebrate our successes, but also sincerely identify where the shortcomings lie, and agree on actions to remedy them.

We are committed to the further development of the PoA and to the strengthening of its implementation. We look forward to working with all other States to make the Second Review Conference a success.
Mr Chairman,

While I have the floor, I should also like to use the opportunity to introduce two draft resolutions.

First, I have the honour to introduce on behalf of at present 75 co-sponsors the draft-resolution contained in document A/C.1/66/L.29, entitled "Transparency in Armaments".

The rationale behind the Transparency in Armaments resolution, of which the Netherlands traditionally is the main sponsor, is that openness in military matters, and particularly transparency in transfers of armaments, contributes to confidence and security-building between governments.

Against this background, with resolution 46/36L of 1991, the United Nations established the UN Register of Conventional Arms, through which all UN Member States can provide annually, on a voluntary basis, data on their imports and exports of conventional arms.

Member States can also make available background information regarding their military holdings, procurement through national production, relevant policies and on transfers of small arms and light weapons.

Every three years, a Group of Governmental Experts reviews the operation and further development of the Register. With resolution 64/54 the General Assembly has requested the Secretary-General to convene a GGE in 2012. Given the very busy disarmament agenda next year, it is foreseen that the GGE will have its first meeting (out of three) only very late in the year. The present draft-resolution therefore decides to take up this issue again at our sixty-eighth session.

Mr Chairman,

The draft-resolution already enjoys the support of a large number of co-sponsors from across all regions. While thanking those delegations that have already done so, it is my pleasure to invite other delegations to join: the draft-resolution is still open for additional co-sponsors.

The Delegation of The Netherlands expresses the hope that the draft-resolution will be adopted with the overwhelming support it has enjoyed in the past.

Secondly, I have the pleasure to introduce draft-resolution A/C.1/66/L.33, entitled "National legislation on transfer of arms, military equipment and dual-use goods and technology".

With this biennial resolution, Member States are invited to enact or improve national legislation, regulations and procedures to exercise effective control over the transfer of arms, military equipment and dual-use goods and technology.
Furthermore States are encouraged to provide, on a voluntary basis, information on their national legislation, regulations and procedures, as well as the changes therein, to the Secretary-General.

The UN Office for Disarmament Affairs maintains a database where all information exchanged pursuant to this resolution can be consulted. This exchange of information not only contributes to mutual understanding, transparency and confidence among Member States but is also beneficial to Member States that are in the process of developing legislation on these transfers.

The current draft is an update of the 2009 resolution on the same subject.

Previously, this resolution has been adopted by consensus. The Netherlands trusts that the resolution again meets with the approval of all Member States and looks forward to its adoption by consensus.

Thank you