Statement

by

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at the

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on Conventional Weapons
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Mr. Chairman,

In recent years, the arms control narrative seems to have focused predominantly on potential threats emanating from nuclear, biological and chemical weapons as well as their means of delivery. This storyline is further buttressed by the fashionable lament over the 'dysfunctional' disarmament machinery that could evolve measures to address the WMD challenges.

While such level of focus and attention may have its own value, the WMD threat should not lessen our attention to the matters relating to regulation and reduction of conventional arms and armed forces. The destabilizing effects of conventional weapons on regional and sub-regional stability and their catastrophic humanitarian toll underscore the need for meaningful action by the international community.

Mr. Chairman,

Admittedly, there is certain degree of spotlight lately on regulating the trade in conventional armaments. What is missing however from this narrow agenda are the following major issues:

First: Global military expenditures are rising again, after a brief hiatus of post-cold war years. Reportedly, the present expenditure on international trade in conventional arms has crossed the colossal amount of US$ 1.5 trillion. Ironically, the total budget of the United Nations, mandated to maintain international peace and security, is around 3% of world’s military expenditure;

Second: The growing military expenditure is accompanied by increasing sophistication in the conventional weaponry and technology. These armaments and their means of development are being traded in huge quantities among the ‘like-minded’ or exported to those who have the financial means to purchase them;

Third: Developing countries are the primary recipients of the total value of international arms transfer agreements. These countries are the “favored” destination for arms sales. New markets are being explored, created and sought after, with scant regard to the destabilizing impact on regional security and stability;

Fourth: Despite exhortations by the General Assembly for a comprehensive arms control approach, the only prescription on the counter is regulating the trade in such arms. Other equally important aspects such as restraints on production, reduction in the number of weapons or forces and decrease in deployments continue to be ignored.
Mr. Chairman,

The Final Document of the First Special Session of the General Assembly on Disarmament (SSOD I) provides a definitive direction to address the issues outlined above. In regard to the global military expenditure, SSOD-I characterized them in 1978 as a "colossal waste of resources" and called for not only reduction in such spending, but for the reinvestment of resources into efforts to fight poverty and improve human conditions.

With regard to the cardinal principle of arms control approaches, paragraph-29 of SSOD-I states, "The adoption of disarmament measures should take place in such an equitable and balanced manner as to ensure the right of each State to security and to ensure that no individual State or group of States may obtain advantages over others at any stage."

In terms of reductions in conventional weaponry and armed forces, SSOD-I noted, "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".

Therefore, in advancing the goal of global and regional peace, security and stability as well as to regulate the conventional weapons, it is essential to anchor our efforts in the consensus document of SSOD-I.

Mr. Chairman,

It is indeed ironic to witness commercial motives superseding the collective security approach of a comprehensive conventional arms control agenda. Arms sellers often encourage both sides in a conflict to buy more such weapons. The only question asked is who has the money. The result is a series of regional arms races mostly in volatile parts of the world. While trying to facilitate talks to ease tensions, senior officials of the selling nations have used such occasions to lobby for sale of sophisticated military equipment produced by their national manufacturers. These officials market their weapons, even as they seek to mediate peace. The normative and legal force of their national and regional arms transfer policies seems to give way for irresistible profits that trade in conventional arms brings to their exchequers.

On the other hand, the demand for weapons emanates from either insecurity or ambition. Some states are seeking to build up their national armed forces on land, in the air, and at the sea, with the declared objective of emerging as a global power, often with the self-proclaimed intent to dominate their own region. Other states affected by the imbalance are then obliged to acquire weapons to ensure a minimum capability to deter aggression and domination. The build up of such massive arms acquisitions not only diverts resources from the desperate requirements of development and poverty alleviation, but also contributes to instability and insecurity at the regional and global levels.
Mr. Chairman,

In view of these disturbing trends, it is imperative that we pursue conventional arms control, at the lowest possible levels of armaments and military forces, since most threats to peace and security arise mainly in states located in the same region or sub-region. States with larger military capabilities have a special responsibility in promoting such agreements for regional security. We can adapt and follow good practices such as the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, a cornerstone of European security.

It is in the light of these considerations that Pakistan presents the following resolutions in this Committee:

a) Conventional Arms Control at the regional and sub-regional level;
b) Regional Disarmament;
c) Confidence building measures in the regional and sub-regional context.

We hope that in keeping with past practice, this Committee will continue to endorse these resolutions.

Mr. Chairman,

We share the international concern over the negative impact of the illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. We support efforts towards full and effective implementation of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

The Programme of Action did strike a balance between humanitarian concerns and the legitimate security needs of States and rightly focused on the “illicit trade”. This balance and focus must be maintained.

Member States have achieved considerable progress in implementing the PoA nationally, regionally and at international levels. We look forward to actively participating in the next year’s Review Conference, which we hope will maintain the spirit of consensus that has characterized the discussions and negotiations on various aspects of the small arms and light weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan is fully committed to the faithful implementation of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the protocols added to it. We are a party to the Convention as well as all its protocols which maintain a delicate balance between minimizing the human suffering without sacrificing the legitimate security interests of states.

Pakistan shares the view that the issue of cluster munitions should be addressed within the CCW framework while striking a balance between military and humanitarian considerations. The proposed Convention must be evolved in a non-discriminatory manner.
The technology-based distinctions between various types of cluster munitions should not deviate from the established and agreed principles enshrined in SSOD-I i.e. disarmament measures should be pursued in an equitable and balanced manner as to ensure the right of each State to security and to ensure that no individual State or group of States may obtain advantages over others at any stage.

Mr. Chairman,

Before concluding, we wish to say a few words on the issue of transparency in armaments. We agree with the broader objectives of pursuing transparency in armaments i.e. as an early warning system of global armament trends and a potential force that ought to put some moral pressure on states responsible for destabilizing arms transfers. However, in our view this tool should be used in combination with others. A level of trust between the states is necessary for transparency measures to succeed. Such measures must be supplemented by efforts and solutions to reduce tensions and resolve disputes through negotiations, dialogue and mediation.

Transparency is a means to an end; not an end itself. The ultimate objective should be to seek restraints and promote CBMs at the regional, sub-regional and global levels. Transparency in armaments must not restrict the right of a State to acquire arms for self-defence.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.